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**Gender and delay in early modern theatre  
patience, prodigality and revenge**

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*patience, prodigality and revenge*

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**Gender and delay in early modern theatre: patience, prodigality and  
revenge**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Sarah Lewis  
King's College London**

2011

## Abstract

In this thesis, I analyse a series of plays from the early modern professional stage to argue that temporality is socially constructed in the early modern period and that time, like gender, class and race, is a category through which early modern subjectivity is negotiated. I suggest that the 'early modern temporal consciousness' was dominated by a binary of action and delay and I explore the ways in which the axis of time, as it is defined by that binary, intersects the axis of gender on the early modern stage. Through my analysis of delay, and of action as its implicit opposite, in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean drama, I argue that a variety of gendered social identities are constructed temporally.

I begin with the best known drama of delay, *Hamlet*. This play sets the terms for my exploration of the gendered experience of time through its engagement with three concepts which are, I suggest, structured by the opposition of action and delay which shapes temporality in early modern society: patience, prodigality and revenge. I proceed with chapters focused on these three thematic foci in turn, analysing a range of domestic comedies and revenge tragedies performed between 1585 and 1622. I argue that these dramatic genres mark fundamental differences in the experience of temporality by men and women and that those differences drive the plots and thematic concerns of the theatre at that time. I conclude by looking at how theatrical repertoires informed the autobiographical writings of Lady Anne Clifford, a 'postponed heiress' who structured her gender and her works through the dramatic models of patience, prodigality and revenge. Thus this thesis offers a double argument: it marks gender as a shaping factor in the experience of time and it helps define early modern gender categories by way of temporality.

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## Note on texts

In this thesis I use the best recent editions of plays where they exist and modern spelling wherever possible, though with the significant exception of the Bowers edition of *The dramatic works in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon* which I use throughout because of its comprehensiveness. Also, I have chosen not to use the modern-spelling Taylor / Middleton edition of part one of *The honest whore* because there is no equivalent modern-spelling edition of part two. Where no modern spelling edition exists, I use the earliest text of each play. When quoting from Shakespeare, I use Wells and Taylor, *The Complete Works*, except in Chapter 1, in which, because of its focus on *Hamlet*, I use the more recent Arden Shakespeare Third Series editions of the 1603, 1604-5 and 1623 texts. I retain original spelling and punctuation when quoting from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources, both in the body of the text, in the footnotes and in the bibliography. However, I replace the long ‘s’ and substitute ‘w’ for double ‘v’ throughout. In the body of the thesis, I use an abbreviated version of the full title of a text, but retain the original spelling. For modern editions and secondary sources, I use the title capitalisation as given by the Library of Congress Cataloguing information where possible. After the first footnote to a given work, all subsequent references to that work are incorporated in parentheses in the body of the text (except when those references are linked to section titles). I give the Harbage limits for date of first performance in brackets after each play named.



## Introduction

### The temporal gendering of early modern subjects

In the last thirty years, a vast amount of literary scholarship has focused on early modern subjectivity as it was socially constructed through the categories of gender, class and race. This work has, in a range of ways, transformed our understanding of early modern culture. However, there is arguably one crucial category to which cultural historians and literary critics have yet to give the necessary consideration. David Houston Wood defines that category in *Time, narrative, and emotion in early modern England*. He suggests that:

critical attention to the gendered, classed, and raced characteristics of the embodied early modern subject has been hampered by its failure to acknowledge the role time and temporality play within the scope of these admittedly crucial concerns.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst recognising that gender, class and race are socially determined facets of selfhood, early modern literary scholars have paid little attention to the fact that, as Jonathan Gil Harris argues, temporality is a ‘culturally variable production’ which shapes social identities in the early modern period and beyond.<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey J. Cohen writes that ‘time has been doomed to the vast realm of that which is unthought’, because it ‘seems so obvious’, in the same way, he goes on to suggest, that gender and race seemed ‘obvious’ until relatively recently.<sup>3</sup> I argue in this thesis that cultural constructions of time are crucial to our understanding of the early modern subject and that close attention needs to be paid to representations of the temporal in early modern texts. By this I do not simply mean that we need more considerations of the literary representation of time *per se* – after all, as I will

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<sup>1</sup> David Houston Wood, *Time, narrative, and emotion in early modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Gil Harris, 'Untimely Mediations', *Early Modern Culture*, 6 (2007) <[www.emc.eserver.org/1-6/harris.html](http://www.emc.eserver.org/1-6/harris.html)> [accessed 11 July 2011] (para. 4 of 23).

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval identity machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 1, 2.

note below, the mid-late twentieth century saw the production of multiple books on the subject of 'Time' in Shakespeare. Rather, I wish to suggest that, despite the extent of this work, there remains a critical need to recognise and analyse the socially constructed nature of temporality and the role time played in shaping the early modern concept of the 'self' and in particular the gendering of the self.

The categories of gender, class and race which dominate critical considerations of early modern subjectivity are commonly presented as being structured via binary oppositions. Eileen Allman suggests that the vertical 'axes' of power which position man over woman, rich over poor and white over other, are connected in complex analogical ways in the drama and culture of early modern England. These horizontal connections between the vertical axes of gender, class and race can support but can also destabilise social order. For example, Othello is a general but also a Moor, Elizabeth I is a queen but also a woman. As a result, Allman suggests that

[t]he English social fabric [. . .] was not so much a neat intersection of mutually reinforcing lines as a series of misalignments and exceptions that placed the primary support structure of the society – and its conflicted human members – under intense stress.<sup>4</sup>

Through my analysis of the drama and culture of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, I wish to argue that a *temporal* axis existed alongside and intersected the axes of gender, class and race in early modern society, further complicating the 'misalignments' of early modern selfhood. Furthermore, I suggest that this temporal axis was similarly structured through a specific binary – that of action and delay – which I argue underpinned the multiple manifestations of the 'early modern' temporal consciousness. The focus of this thesis is primarily on ideas of delay and deferral; at the same time, however, my analysis of the various ways in which time was experienced and presented as a *rejection* of action also

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<sup>4</sup> Eileen Allman, *Jacobean revenge tragedy and the politics of virtue* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), p. 23.

inevitably necessitates a consideration of how time was experienced and presented *as* action. Analysing early modern delay is only possible through the analysis of early modern action as its opposite. Therefore throughout this thesis I work between the two poles of action and delay which I argue structured temporal experience and, by extension, gendered identity, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

Little critical work to date has explored how the axes of gender, race and class intersect with the axis of time, and few literary scholars have challenged the homogeneity of the critical notion of early modern temporality in order to explore the variety of ways in which different cultural groups experienced time and constructed themselves as temporal entities in early modern England. In this thesis, I work towards filling this critical gap by analysing early modern theatre as a culturally significant site for the intersection of the axes of time and of gender. I examine drama and culture at the turn of the seventeenth century to consider how the binary action / delay interacted with that of male / female in theatrical writing to produce a range of gendered and temporal identities which offer valuable access to early modern conceptions of selfhood. I will suggest that the gendered self is also always a temporal self; that is, through my examination of the axes of gender and of time in early modern English society and the binary oppositions of male / female and action / delay which structure them, I will argue that time is gendered, and gender, temporal.

I will begin this introduction with a critical survey of literary scholarship on the subject of early modern temporality from the 1960s onward. In the process of this survey, I will foreground the works which have particularly influenced this thesis in their exploration either of the conjunctions of time *and* gender or specifically of delay. In section two I explore some of the key ways in which early modern society engaged with concepts of time, suggesting that the unstable binary opposition between action and delay was the primary framework through which temporal experiences were ordered and presented in the

late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods. In section three, I examine early modern conduct and medical literature noting the extent to which, in its focus on the differences between the physical attributes and social roles of men and women, this material draws on the binary opposition between action and delay in a variety of often contradictory ways, in order temporally to construct the understanding of gender in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Finally, in the last section of this introduction, I outline the structure and content of the five chapters of this thesis.

## i Gendering time in recent criticism

In his essay, 'Untimely Mediations', Jonathan Gil Harris notes that '[o]nce upon a time, Time was all the rage in Shakespeare scholarship' (Harris, 'Mediations', para. 1 of 23). He argues that between 1960 and 1980, multiple works were produced which presented time 'with a capital T', by which he implies their tendency to proffer a 'universalizing conception of Time' (Harris, 'Mediations', para. 4 of 23). Harris identifies 1964 as the 'high-water mark' for temporal analysis in Shakespearean scholarship, an apex he manifests in Inga-Stina Ewbank's article 'The Triumph of Time', which was first published in that year and which considered time as the principle theme in *The Winter's Tale* (Harris, 'Mediations', para. 1 of 23).<sup>5</sup> As will become clear, Ewbank sets the tone for the next two decades of early modern temporal criticism by suggesting that this play is all about 'what time does to man'; she represents 'early modern' Time as an independently powerful force which acts *on* the homogenous 'early modern' subject.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, several monographs which explored the subject of time in early modern drama were published, the majority of them focusing on Shakespeare.<sup>7</sup> Frederick Turner's *Shakespeare and the nature of time: moral and philosophical themes in some plays and poems by William Shakespeare*, was the first of these temporal studies. Turner presents time as a monolithic force which 'affects human beings' in generally negative ways.<sup>8</sup> In his consideration of eight of Shakespeare's plays,

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<sup>5</sup> Numerous articles published between 1960 and 1980 explore time in relation to early modern authors other than Shakespeare. For example, David Kaula considered 'Time and the Timeless in *Everyman* and *Dr. Faustus*' in 1960. In 1971, Ronald Broude published an article entitled 'Time, Truth, and Right in *The Spanish Tragedy*', and D. C. Muecke explored 'Aspects of Baroque Time and *The Revenger's Tragedy*' in 1972.

<sup>6</sup> Inga-Stina Ewbank, 'The Triumph of Time', in *Shakespeare: 'The Winter's Tale', A casebook*, ed. by Kenneth Muir (London: Macmillan, 1968; repr. 1983), pp. 98-115 (p. 99).

<sup>7</sup> A book length study of early modern literature and time had been published in 1912: Mable Buland, *The Presentation of Time in The Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Henry Holt, 1912). Buland's text was reprinted in 1969, reflecting the glut of critical work focused on temporality which Harris describes in the 1960s.

<sup>8</sup> Frederick Turner, *Shakespeare and the nature of time: moral and philosophical themes in some plays and poems by William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 1.

Turner consistently positions time as mankind's enemy. Like both Ewbank and Turner, Ricardo Quinones' *The Renaissance Discovery of Time*, published in 1972, argues that time was an enemy for early modern man. Focusing on the work of Dante, Petrarch, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, Quinones thesis is that '[t]ime itself and temporal response are factors in distinguishing Renaissance from medieval': early modern man has none of the indifference to the passage of time which Quinones suggests defines temporal consciousness in the middle ages.<sup>9</sup> Wylie Sypher similarly suggests that a 'disturbing sense of mutability' dominated the 'early modern temporal consciousness' in *The Ethic of Time: Structures of Experience in Shakespeare*, published in 1976.<sup>10</sup> He also identifies four main time schemes at work in Shakespeare's plays: time as linear, time as cyclic, time as retributive and time manifest as 'moments of psychic duration', in chapters on *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *King Lear* (Sypher, 4).

Employing the same model used by Quinones, G. F. Waller's study of early modern temporality from 1976, *The strong necessity of time: the philosophy of time in Shakespeare and Elizabethan literature*, begins with a broad consideration of the 'early modern temporal consciousness', before focusing on seven Shakespeare plays as well as on works by Raleigh, Spenser and Donne. In contrast with Waller's work, David Scott Kastan's *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* lacks much of the detailed analysis of early modern temporal philosophies which his predecessors offer. In Kastan's book, published in 1982, we are presented with a consideration of time as an aspect of genre. He outlines three 'shapes' of time; the time of the histories, which are 'linear and open'; the time of the tragedies, which are 'linear and terrifyingly closed'; and the time of the romances, which are linear and

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<sup>9</sup> Ricardo J. Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Wylie Sypher, *The Ethic of Time: Structures of Experience in Shakespeare* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), p. 3.

decisively, yet somewhat ambiguously, concluded: the endings of romances, Kastan suggests, are 'pregnant moments'.<sup>11</sup>

Although these works do, to varying degrees, recognise that broad ideological change affected the construction of time and temporality in the early modern period, they do not distinguish between the temporal experiences of different social strata. All these texts consider 'Renaissance man' to be involved in a fraught relationship with temporality which distinguishes him from his medieval forbears. However, none of these temporal studies consider how notions of time work to shape early modern concepts of gender, or how gendered identities are constructed along temporal lines. Wood suggests that, particularly in the 1970s, early modern scholarly interest in time

found purchase in modes of historical analysis, genre analysis, Christian eschatology, the humanistic manipulation of a personified 'Time' acting as either 'Revealer' or 'Destroyer,' or of rival dramatic clocks at works [*sic*] within plays

(Wood, 6-7)

These explorations of time, Wood goes on to argue, 'tend to read it transculturally as both a transparent medium and one essentially apolitical in application' (Wood, 7). Similarly, Harris suggests that works from this period – the 1960s, 70s and early 80s – broadly locate time 'entirely outside the sphere of politics' and it is this universalising tendency which creates the works I have hitherto described as a coherent critical group (Harris, 'Mediations', para. 3 of 23). Critical works which do recognise the culturally variable nature of temporal identities have emerged in the last thirty years. Those works, as I shall now go on to explore, often posit a challenge to the simple binary opposition between medieval and early modern temporalities in order to recognise the heterogeneous nature of time across the strata of gender, class and race.

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<sup>11</sup> David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 26, 31.

Despite the dominance of theories of space which were central to new historicist and cultural materialist readings of early modern culture, there are in fact a handful of important works of early modern literary criticism produced during the last thirty years which position time and temporality as culturally variable. These works include Michael Bristol's *Big-Time Shakespeare* (1996), John Spencer Hill's *Infinity, faith and time: Christian humanism and Renaissance literature* (1997) and Agnes Heller's *The time is out of joint* (2002). New historicism and cultural materialism tended, as Harris suggests, to 'privilege space over time', and, in their quest to 'trump the universal with the local', rejected the reductive universalising impulse which drove much of the early modern temporal criticism of the 60s and 70s (Harris, 'Mediations', para. 3 of 23). However, Bristol, Hill and Heller's works blazed a trail for a resurgence of interest in time in the last few years, and temporality has once again become 'a lively topic of inquiry in Shakespeare and early modern studies' (Harris, 'Mediations', para. 4 of 23).

Two monographs in particular are the most recent contributions to what has been a slow-burning revival of interest in early modern critical temporal studies. These works, both published in 2009, engage with concepts of temporality in ways which deconstruct the monolith of 'Time' by recognising the multiplicity of temporalities which work to define both subjects and objects in the early modern period. Wood's *Time, narrative, and emotion in early modern England* focuses on the ways in which 'time shapes the concept of the self within early modern discourses related to health and emotion' (Wood, 5). Whereas, in 1964, Ewbank was exploring what time 'means and does to man', in 2009, Wood asks what 'we ourselves mean through, and by, time' (Ewbank, 114, Wood, 7). By examining four key 'temporal' early modern texts (the *Old Arcadia*, *Othello*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Samson Agonistes*), he looks at the ways in which time is used to structure subjective emotional experience in the early modern period. Where Wood focuses on subjects, Harris



in *Untimely Matter in the time of Shakespeare*, is concerned with recognising the ‘polychronic’ and ‘multitemporal’ nature of objects in the early modern period.<sup>12</sup> Drawing on the temporal philosophies of Bruno Latour and Michel Serres, Harris analyses *Macbeth* and *Othello* as well as the *Henriad*, George Herbert’s *The Temple*, John Stow’s *Survey of London* and Margaret Cavendish’s works, in order to suggest that the multiplicity of temporalities which simultaneously define objects – and the ‘palimpsests of matter’ those temporalities produce – create time as an ‘axis in western understandings of otherness’ (Harris, 23).

In addition to Wood’s and Harris’s studies, a number of other critical explorations of early modern temporality and literature from the last thirty years have also had a significant impact on my own research. Patricia Parker’s work on concepts of dilation explores the rhetorical, religious, judicial and erotic contexts of deferral in the early modern period, and her consideration of ‘the feminine strategy of amorous delay’ is, as will become clear, central to my work.<sup>13</sup> Cathy Yandell’s *Carpe Corpus: time and gender in early modern France*, which was published in 2000, has also been influential in terms of its approach to time as a social and specifically a gendered construct. Yandell states that her aim is to ‘discover what time means and how it functions for writing men and women in early modern France’.<sup>14</sup> She is primarily interested in the cultural construction of gender and in the ‘problems of time especially as they constitute what might be called “temporal ideology”’, by which she means ‘the conjunction of philosophical, psychological, and

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<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely matter in the time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Patricia Parker, 'Dilation and Delay: Renaissance Matrices', *Poetics Today*, 5.3 (1984), 519-35 (p. 533). See also: Patricia Parker, 'Shakespeare and rhetoric: 'dilation' and 'delation' in *Othello*', in *Shakespeare and the question of theory*, ed. by Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 54-74; Patricia Parker, *Literary fat ladies: rhetoric, gender, property* (London: Methuen, 1987); Patricia Parker, 'Othello and Hamlet: Dilation, Spying, and the "Secret Place" of Woman', in *Shakespeare reread: the texts in new contexts*, ed. by Russ McDonald (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 105-146.

<sup>14</sup> Cathy Yandell, *Carpe Corpus: time and gender in early modern France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), p. 12.

moral attitudes toward time and its effects' (Yandell, 13). Judith Halberstam's *In a queer time and place: transgender bodies, subcultural lives* and Carla Freccero's *Queer / Early / Modern* both consider the 'strange temporalities' of queerness and, like Yandell, have provided me with examples of how to deconstruct the reductively homogenous concept of 'early modern temporality'.<sup>15</sup> Amy Boesky's chapter 'Giving Time to Women: the Eternising Project of Early Modern England' has also been particularly influential in the writing of this thesis. Boesky considers the social significance of the ornamental timepieces which the aging Queen Elizabeth received from courtiers at the end of the sixteenth century. She regrets the fact that 'so little work has been done on the use of temporality in the construction of categories such as class and gender' and suggests that time must be recognised as 'a crucial marker in talking about gender'.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond these works of early modern literary criticism, two theoretical concepts have been foundational to my exploration of the binary opposition between action and delay which is central to this thesis. The first of these is Jacques Derrida's *différance*. Derrida defines *différance* as follows:

The verb 'to differ' [*différer*] seems to differ from itself. On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernibility; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of a *spacing* and *temporalizing* that puts off until 'later' what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible. Sometimes the *different* and sometimes the *deferred* correspond [in French] to the verb 'to differ'.<sup>17</sup>

The French verb *différer* can mean both to differ in kind, and to defer in time, and it is this dual meaning which Derrida identifies through *différance*. *Différance* exemplifies the way

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<sup>15</sup> Judith Halberstam, *In a queer time and place: transgender bodies, subcultural lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Amy Boesky, 'Giving Time to Women: the Eternising Project in Early Modern England', in *This double voice': gendered writing in early modern England*, ed. by Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 123-41 (p. 132).

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. by David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 129.

in which systems of signification such as language perpetually *defer* meaning through *differences* of meaning. As Derrida suggests,

[t]he sign represents the present in its absence [. . .] The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence [. . .] the circulation of signs defers the moment in which we can encounter the thing itself, make it ours, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, intuit its presence'<sup>18</sup>

This deferral is infinite: meaning is always postponed in language and finite signification is perpetually deferred through the 'systematic play of differences' (Derrida, *Margins*, 11).

Derrida suggests that *différance* 'is not simply active (any more than it is a subjective accomplishment); it rather indicates the middle voice, it precedes and sets up the opposition between passivity and activity' (Derrida, *Speech*, 130). Through *différance* Derrida recognises that language and meaning are structured by the binary opposition of passivity and activity, and it is this binary opposition – between delay and action – which is of central importance to my understanding of early modern temporalities. The impossibility of reaching a conclusive 'meaning' or ending is also the defining temporal position of an early modern Christian society anticipating the perpetually deferred Day of Judgment. Thus Derrida's *différance* resonates throughout this thesis in that it describes culture and language as circumscribed by the interplay of action and delay which I argue contributes to the construction and presentation of gendered identities on the early modern stage.

The second theoretical concept which has been crucial to the shaping of this thesis is Judith Butler's definition of gender as a '*corporeal style*, an "act", as it were, which is both intentional and performative'.<sup>19</sup> This proposition is central to *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*, which was published in 1990 and in which Butler suggests that the performance of gender is reliant upon the '*stylized repetition of acts*'

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<sup>18</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', in *Margins of philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 3-27 (p. 9).

<sup>19</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 139.

(Butler, 140). It is through repetition that gendered identity is constituted as a '*social temporality*':

If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the spatial metaphor of 'ground' will be displaced and revealed as a stylized configuration, indeed, a gendered corporealization of time. The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *discontinuity*, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this 'ground'.  
(Butler, 141)

Time and gender for Butler are inextricably linked, and her argument for the eternal deferral of any kind of definitively gendered subjectivity is founded on what she considers to be the necessarily repetitive nature of gendered actions of 'self'. Meaning for Derrida and gender for Butler are both, therefore, perpetually delayed; neither can be finalised. However, it is through the *actions* of repetition that these delays are born and it is this paradoxical interaction between action and delay, between waiting and not waiting, which is foundational to my thesis.

Other works by feminist theorists have also influenced this thesis, particularly Julia Kristeva's 1981 essay, 'Women's Time', and Rita Felski's book from 2000, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*. Kristeva explores the temporality of women as 'cyclical and monumental' in opposition to the masculine conception of time 'as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; time as departure, progression, and arrival'.<sup>20</sup> Building on Kristeva, Felski begins her book by asking '[d]o we live in the same or different times?'.<sup>21</sup> She poses a series of questions which are central to the temporal considerations of this thesis:

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<sup>20</sup> Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', *Signs*, 7.1 (1981), 13-35 (p. 17).

<sup>21</sup> Rita Felski, *Doing time: feminist theory and postmodern culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 1.

Is it possible to [. . .] talk meaningfully about men's time and women's time, Western time and non-Western time? How can we explain the fact that individuals and groups may perceive time very differently and yet seem, in crucial respects, to inhabit the same time? What are the stakes in either affirming or denying the contemporaneity and coevalness of others?

(Felski, 1)

In the work of Derrida, Butler, Kristeva and Felski, the conceptualisation of the subjective self is dependent on negotiations of the binary opposition between action and delay. It is this critical work on temporality – and especially the way in which these works consider time to be a social construct dependent on the opposition of waiting and not waiting – which has shaped my own considerations of time and its engagement with gender in the early modern period.

Through this survey of early modern temporal scholarship, it has become apparent, first and foremost, that there is currently a lack of critical work which focuses on the social construction of time in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In particular, little has been done to explore the ways in which different genders, classes and races are presented as experiencing time in contrasting ways on the early modern stage. In this thesis, I work toward filling that critical gap by considering the ways in which a temporal axis of difference (of action and delay) interacts with a gendered axis of difference (of male and female) in early modern theatre and culture. Before I consider how temporality and gender converge in the conduct and medical literature of the period, laying the foundations for my consideration of this convergence in the drama of the period, I will outline the ways in which the binary opposition of action and delay is foundational to what is commonly defined as the ‘early modern temporal consciousness’.

## **ii      Defining the ‘early modern temporal consciousness’**

The ways in which educated and mostly wealthy European men wrote about time in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has shaped our perception of what is broadly considered to be the ‘early modern temporal consciousness’. Our understanding of temporality in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, influenced, as it is, by critics such as Turner, Sypher and Quinones, is really an understanding of how those early modern men constructed their own identities and the identities of those they wrote about and for, via their considerations of time. Recognising that what has been identified by these critics as simply ‘early modern time’ is really ‘male, white and wealthy early modern time’, leads to the acknowledgement that early modern temporality as it has been constructed reveals the privileging of the male, Christian and aristocratic experience of time. Once we acknowledge the cultural specificity of early modern temporality, it is possible to begin to identify the ways in which that monolith of time and of masculine authority is in fact inherently unstable.

In this section, I suggest that a binary opposition between action and delay lies at the heart of what is commonly defined as the ‘early modern temporal consciousness’. I also suggest that this binary opposition operates in two contrasting, even paradoxical ways: at once valuing action over delay and delay over action. It is this constant interchangeability of temporal positions which I explore throughout this thesis and which I suggest enables the drama of the period to negotiate a variety of temporally gendered identities, authorised and subversive, on the early modern stage.

The early modern conceptualisations of time as destroyer and time as revealer are both frequently cited by critics as foundational to the ‘early modern temporal consciousness’. Contrasting these temporal frameworks exposes what I suggest is the

foundational opposition which structures all early modern temporal considerations of time: the binary of action and delay. As I will argue, the notion of time as destroyer inspires human endeavour and thus encourages the early modern subject to act. In contrast, the notion of time as revealer necessitates human patience and passivity and requires the early modern subject to wait. However, as will become apparent, the alignment of time the destroyer with action, and time the revealer with delay, is far from stable: time as destroyer is also presented as necessitating the acceptance of deferral and time as revealer is also used to motivate action.

*Tempus edax rerum*, time the destroyer of all things, was one of the most familiar manifestations of temporality in early modern literature and art. The fleeting passage of time, invariably leading to death and destruction, was the central temporal premise of countless early modern texts. Time was presented as governing the ‘law of change’ in various forms; represented as chance and fortune, time itself was considered to be the force which determined the mutability of existence.<sup>22</sup> As G. F. Waller suggests, one of the key intellectual issues of the early modern period was society’s ‘insistent preoccupation with mutability, the sheer fact of change in life, the threats it seems to pose to human security and permanence and the consequent problem of finding permanent values in an ever-changing world’.<sup>23</sup>

In *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Erwin Panofsky argues that the early modern personification of Father Time drew on representations of the Roman God Saturn, who was ‘held responsible for floods, famines

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<sup>22</sup> Sarah Hutton, 'Aspects of the Concept of Time in Elizabethan and Jacobean England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1977), p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> G. F. Waller, *The Strong Necessity of Time: The Philosophy of Time in Shakespeare and Elizabethan Literature* (Hague: Mouton, 1976), p. 10.

and all other kinds of disasters'.<sup>24</sup> He suggests that the iconology of time was, from the fourteenth century onward, inherently associated with human mortality, and suggests that 'Time, having appropriated the qualities of the deadly, cannibalistic, scythe-brandishing Saturn, became more and more intimately related to Death' (Panofsky, 82). This remodelling of Time as destroyer in the early modern period supports Ricardo Quinones thesis, as outlined in *The Renaissance Discovery of Time*, that in Europe from the fourteenth century there was an 'increased sense of urgency' (Quinones, 13). G. J. Whitrow makes a similar claim in *Time in history: the evolution of our general awareness of time and temporal perspective*, suggesting that '[i]n the sixteenth century people tended to be obsessed with the destructive aspect of time'.<sup>25</sup>

The first wave of critical studies of early modern temporality, published between 1964 and 1982 and outlined in section one of this introduction, all, to varying degrees, suggest that the confidence man had in the significance of his temporality in the medieval period was replaced by an anxiety about time as destructive and mankind's temporal role as fleeting and insignificant in the Renaissance. As David Scott Kastan suggests:

The bells that tolled the canonical hours and attested to the role of time within the economy of salvation gave way to mechanical clocks that mark the moment by moment annihilation of the present [. . .] The merciful, elastic time of *Everyman* [. . .] is replaced by the unyielding, unforgiving time of *Dr Faustus*.

(Kastan, 5-6)

Time for man in the middle ages is considered to have been cyclical; it is ordered by the ebbs and flows of the natural world and the repetition of the liturgical calendar.<sup>26</sup> Early

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<sup>24</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes In the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1939; repr. 1972), p. 77.

<sup>25</sup> G. J. Whitrow, *Time in history: the evolution of our general awareness of time and temporal perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 132.

<sup>26</sup> On the importance of the liturgical calendar, see Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 41. For a consideration of the annual cycles of the rural calendar, see A. M. Wattebot, 'The experience of time in early modern England,



modern man, in contrast, is considered to have been charged with a sense of temporal desperation; he feels the need to fill every minute and to fight the destructive nature of time, which is conceived as linear and unrelenting.<sup>27</sup>

This newfound sense of urgency is often presented as the result of economic and technological advancement, such as the popularisation of the mechanical clock and urbanisation.<sup>28</sup> These social developments are cited both as evidence of and as the driving forces for the shift from a task-based feudal society dependent on the ongoing cyclicity of gift exchange to an increasingly time-structured secular and capitalist society dependent on linear and finite relationships defined by credit.<sup>29</sup> This binary between a medieval and an early modern conceptualisation of time is foundational to many critical and historical works on early modern temporality in the second half of the twentieth century. Medieval man is considered to have passively accepted time's passage and to have recognised that mankind's temporal experience of the world is only a delay – an 'exile's flight' – on the path to eternity with God (Waller, 10). However, the claim that, prior to the fifteenth century in England, the medieval temporal consciousness was defined by a 'vast indifference to time' and a lack of an historical perspective has been broadly discredited by

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with special reference to Eastern England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, 2000), pp. 32-3.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Whitrow on the shift from 'duration' to 'instant'. He argues that the Reformation 'contributed to the dissolution of the timeless medieval world-picture with its hierarchical structure in which everything had its assigned place' and that as a result of this dissolution 'Western thinkers began to regard personal existence as being essentially based on the present moment' (p. 170).

<sup>28</sup> On the development of the mechanical clock, see Carlo Maria Cipolla, *Clocks and culture, 1300-1700* (London: Collins, 1967). See also Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum, *History of the hour: clocks and modern temporal orders*, trans. by Thomas Dunlap (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). On urbanisation and time, see David S. Landes, *Revolution in time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Jacques Le Goff, *Time, work, and culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); and Chris Humphrey, 'Time and Urban Culture in Late Medieval England', in *Time in the medieval world*, ed. by Chris Humphrey and W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001), pp. 105-17.

<sup>29</sup> For more on this, see Lorna Hutson, *The usurer's daughter: male friendship and fictions of women in sixteenth-century England* (London: Routledge, 1994).

both historians and literary critics.<sup>30</sup> It seems that *both* early modern and medieval temporalities, therefore, fundamentally valued human endeavour over human passivity; to act *in* time was better than to wait for the end *of* time.

This threat of mutability is countered by what is often defined as a specifically early modern focus on human endeavour and on the actions which drive human achievement. It is commonly argued that the conceptualisation of time as destroyer inspired a commitment to action and a rejection of the passive acceptance of mankind's inevitable demise which had defined the middle ages. As Quinones suggests,

on mans' part the attitude becomes one of militancy, of the need to make response. New ideals emerge to form the arsenal of human possibility. Children, fame, fidelity in love, all those areas that lend continuance to human life are endorsed as hopeful responses to devouring time.

(Quinones, 16)

The early modern conception of time as destroyer has been commonly identified as the driving force behind the surge of creativity which is often used to define the Renaissance itself.

Whereas time as destroyer championed human action over human passivity, the other popular manifestation of time in early modern art and literature – time as the revealer of truth – demanded that mankind wait rather than to act. In pictorial depictions of *veritas filia temporis*, time is personified as an old man who draws Truth, a beautiful young woman, out into the light. Protestant propagandists used this trope to suggest the legitimacy

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<sup>30</sup> Marc Leopold Benjamin Bloch, *Feudal society*, trans. by L. A. Manyon (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1961), p. 74. In addition to Bloch and Quinones, Georges Poulet perhaps most famously supports the notion that 'for the man of the Renaissance, time had come to have an entirely different meaning from that which it had for the man of the Middle Ages', Georges D. Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, trans. by Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1956), pp. 9-10. In the last ten years, historians and literary critics have challenged the simplicity of this binary opposition between medieval and early modern temporal philosophies. See for example Michael D. Bristol, *Big-time Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 154-5; Dohrn-van Rossum, *History of the hour: clocks and modern temporal orders*; Robert Poole, *Time's alteration: Calendar reform in early modern England* (London: UCL Press, 1998); and Peter Burke, 'The Sense of Anachronism from Petrarch to Poussin', in *Time in the medieval world*, ed. by Chris Humphrey and W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001), pp. 157-73.

of the Reformation; *veritas filia temporis* was a motto used during the coronation procession of Elizabeth I. In one of the symbolic pageants of the procession through London, Time brought Truth forth from a dark cave to hand the Queen a copy of the Bible.<sup>31</sup> Thus time as revealer is positioned within a framework of revelation which is predicated on human patience and on the necessary delay of satisfaction.

The flexibility of such tropes in the early modern period is evidenced by the fact that the Catholic Mary Tudor also used the Latin motto, having it imprinted on her coins and seal.<sup>32</sup> Both Elizabeth and Mary use the concept of time as the revealer of truth to suggest that their faiths were a return to a more perfect past.<sup>33</sup> For Protestants, 'Truth, Time's daughter, is the Protestant truth which has long been confined in underground obscurity by the hypocrisy of the Papacy' (Iwasaki, 177). And similarly for Catholics, 'Truth' is the Catholic truth which, during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, had been obscured by Protestant heresy. *Veritas filia temporis* is therefore predicated on the notion of return to a lost past, and the passive acceptance of delay and deferral which ultimately enables that return. In the same way that, as I have suggested, medieval temporality shared the consciousness of mutability which is often used to distinguish the conceptualisation of time in the Renaissance, early modern temporality shared the passive acceptance of time's passing which is commonly used to define medieval temporal indifference.

The 'early modern temporal consciousness', it seems, is inherently unstable. As both revealer and destroyer, early modern time exposes the binary opposition between action and delay which I suggest is foundational to the ways people thought about time and

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<sup>31</sup> For more on this see Gordon McMullan's introduction to *Henry VIII: William Shakespeare, King Henry VIII (All is True)*, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series, ed. by Gordon McMullan (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2000; repr. 2002),

<sup>32</sup> Soji Iwasaki, *Shakespeare and the Icon of Time* (Tokyo: Liber, 1973; repr. 1992), p. 182.

<sup>33</sup> Time as the Father of Truth appeared in three royal entries and in Middleton's *The Triumphs of Truth*, which was part of the Lord Mayor's Show (Ewbank, 106).

about their gendered identities in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. As destroyer, time necessitates and celebrates the actions of human endeavour. As revealer, time necessitates and celebrates mankind's ability to wait with patience and reject action. Furthermore, the binary opposition between action and delay is further complicated when, as I will now suggest, as 'destroyer' time is employed to encourage men to wait and as 'revealer' it is used to stir men into action.

As G. J. Whitrow suggests, by positioning time as destroyer, early modern thinkers such as Luther and Raleigh fixate on a lost perfection, and are

in general accord with the prevailing opinion of thinkers and writers of the Renaissance and Reformation eras, who were almost entirely backward-looking. Overwhelmed by the sense of the 'Cosmic Fall', they tended to believe in the existence of a primeval 'Golden Age', followed by irreversible decline.

(Whitrow, 133)

The idea that things are perpetually in decline posits the existence of an originating period of perfection from which the world moves further and further away. As Sarah Hutton suggests, 'most temporal schemata of the period presuppose an original ideal state after which a process of decline has set in' (Hutton, 36). Therefore attempts to return to or to recreate a past period of perfection provide early modern individuals with a temporal strategy which *resists* the linear trajectory toward their own destruction, instead pushing them back through time toward a lost golden age. Whitrow argues that rulers of the period such as Philip II of Spain, Elizabeth I and Henry IV of France saw that it was their duty not to be 'founders and innovators' but to be 'upholders and maintainers' regarding their reforms 'as a return to some pristine model of the past' (Whitrow, 133). Time as destroyer, therefore, is also used to advocate delay over action in the 'early modern temporal consciousness'. Similarly, as revealer of truth, time encourages action at the same time as it

ensures patient delay. As revealer, time is figured as advancing forward: time is linear and develops in one direction from a bleak past to a brighter future.

Thus as both revealer and destroyer, time in the early modern period is *both* linear in that it moves the individual toward revelation, and simultaneously cyclical in that it enables a return to a past perfection which has been corrupted. Writing about the dominant conceptualisations of time as destroyer and time as revealer, John Spencer Hill suggests that

[i]n Renaissance literature time is generally Janus-faced, bearing a double aspect [...] In other words, while ‘cormorant’ time is the inevitable and negative condition of human morality, it is also the necessary and positive condition of human growth and fulfilment, of truth and knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

In the early modern period, time destroys and heals simultaneously and at their most fundamental levels, as I have illustrated, these contrasting conceptualisations of time and of history negotiate between the binary opposition of action and delay.

In the same way that the concepts of time as destroyer and time as revealer are structured by the binary opposition of action and delay, the two formative philosophies of time in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on which these temporal concepts draw – the classical and the Christian – are also founded on that binary opposition. As Christopher C. Hong suggests, the Greeks, like other non-Judaeo-Christians of the ancient Mediterranean, considered the world to be ‘moving aimlessly in a circle’.<sup>35</sup> They believed that ‘a meaningless succession of events made up history’ and thus they declined to find ‘significant patterns’ in humankind’s temporal experiences (Hong, 89). This cyclicity of time was conceived as being endlessly repeated without end or beginning. John Spencer

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<sup>34</sup> John Spencer Hill, *Infinity, faith and time: Christian humanism and Renaissance literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> Christopher C. Hong, *A History of the Future: A Study of the Four Major Eschatologies* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981), p. 89.

Hill suggests that ‘Greek thinkers of virtually every school [. . .] accepted in some form or other the idea of the Great Year’, the concept that ‘every ten to thirty thousand years’ marked the ‘cyclical return of the celestial bodies to their original configuration’ a return which was ‘followed by a recurrence of the events of the previous cycle in all their details and in the same order’ (Hill, 71).

This denial of linear advancement is apparent in *Timaeus*, Plato’s dialogue from c. 360 BCE. Unlike most Greek thinkers, Plato believed in a creator, a Demiurge who made the cosmos in imitation of ‘the perfect pattern of the eternal world of intelligible essences’.<sup>36</sup> Plato writes that when the Demiurge went to work, ‘he resolved to make a moving image of eternity’ (Hill, 70). This conceptualisation of temporality has meant that many consider that Plato, whose temporal philosophy dominated in early modern Europe, ‘declined to take time seriously’.<sup>37</sup> His essential thesis of two realms devalues the sensible world of temporality and change as not fully ‘real’, with only the ‘semblances of moral and aesthetic values, whereas the intelligible world, eternal and changeless, has true being and absolute value’ (Rau, 21). Thus Plato’s philosophy and the cyclicity of classical temporality in general both work to devalue the actions of human endeavour.

In direct contrast with this classical conception of time as cyclical, within a Christian temporal philosophy, time operates in one direction and through it mankind journeys toward an ultimate goal. Time, for Christians, is defined via action, and is conceived in the Bible

as linear, as history, as the vehicle for fulfilment, as the carrier of meaning. It opens with an account of ancestral chronology, focuses on a set of historic events, and ends with prophecy. From Genesis

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<sup>36</sup> Catherine Rau, ‘Theories of Time in Ancient Philosophy’, in *Aspects of time*, ed. by C. A. Patrides (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), pp. 21-29 (p. 21).

<sup>37</sup> Charles M. Sherover, ed., *The human experience of time: the development of its philosophical meaning* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1975; repr. 2001), p. 15. See also Rau, p. 21.

through Revelation, there is a continuity of movement from an unrepeatable past to a yet pending future.

(Sherover, *Human*, 1)

For Christians, time was finite and its ending was predetermined. God creates a beginning and an ending and the time which moves in one direction between these two points defines Christian existence. As Charles Sherover suggests, '[t]ime was created by God at the outset of creation; it was intrinsically connected with his creation as its concomitant or its form' (Sherover, *Human*, 1). Within a Christian frame, time *is* being, rather than existing simply as a mirror of a more perfect eternity. Furthermore, by journeying through time, humankind can achieve unity with God *outside* of time.

'Christianity began with the announcement that time and history were about to end'; both Christ's coming and the revelation it promised, and, following the crucifixion, the prospect of Christ's imminent return, meant that the first Christians considered themselves to be living through the last days.<sup>38</sup> The knowledge of God's apocalyptic plan provides Christians with a sense of history's structure, purpose, and legibility. The signs which point humanity toward the ultimate realisation of God's providence can be read in history:

Because time is thought of as a progressing line, it is possible here for something to be 'fulfilled'; a divine plan can move forward to complete execution; the goal which beckons at the end of the line can give to the entire process which is taking place all along the line the impulse to strive thither.<sup>39</sup>

As Whitrow suggests, in the first centuries after the advent of Christ 'the Church fathers had converted history from an endless sequence of cycles' – the cycles which dominated the classical conceptualisation of time – 'to a vision of the whole universe moving from Creation to Redemption' (Whitrow, 132). As I have suggested, the early modern

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<sup>38</sup> Paula Fredriksen, 'Tyconius and Augustine Apocalypse', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 20-37 (p. 20).

<sup>39</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. by Floyd V. Filson (London: SCM Press, 1951; repr. 1962), pp. 53-4.

conceptualisation of time as both destroyer and revealer places humankind in an anticipatory position; it draws the individual toward a conclusion of either destruction or revelation which is continually promised and must be actively striven for.

However, the realisation of that conclusion is, within a Christian framework, perpetually deferred. Christian temporality is not only structured through a celebration of action and linear development through history, but is also premised on delay and on the eternal deferral of the ultimate goal. Jesus' first lesson as a preacher is that the end is nigh: 'Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'.<sup>40</sup> Jesus denies the possibility of himself, or any of God's subjects, predicting *when* the Kingdom will arrive: 'of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the father' (Mark 13.32). St. Paul tells us that 'the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night', and stresses the need for constant readiness for that moment; we should be '[l]ooking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God' (2 Peter 3.10, 12). Waiting with patience, rather than acting through time, is also central to Christian temporal philosophy.

Following the crucifixion, early Christians maintained their expectation of the imminence of the day of the Lord. Therefore, as Robert Markus suggests, '[e]verything was new, but nothing had changed [...] The end had come, and yet it had been indefinitely postponed'.<sup>41</sup> Time was and continued to be, very much out of joint for Christians who had to contend with a 'strained time-scheme [. . .] That is, both a time of fulfilment, of achieved hopes and promises, and yet also of unrealized hope and of waiting, both before the end,

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<sup>40</sup> Robert P. Carroll and Stephen Prickett, eds, *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; repr. 1998), Matthew 4.17.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Markus, 'Living within Sight of the End', in *Time in the medieval world*, ed. by Chris Humphrey and W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001), pp. 23-34 (p. 24).



and after it' (Markus, 24). The delay of the *second* coming is thus foundational to the development of Christianity. As Bernard McGinn suggests:

If Christianity was founded on the hope for the imminent return of Jesus to manifest fully the new aeon that had begun with his rising from the dead [. . .] then it stands to reason that the delay in his return must have occasioned difficulties for the Christian communities that proliferated through the Roman Empire in the second half of the first century A.D.<sup>42</sup>

Christians continued to believe in the imminent return of Christ, despite the fact that history 'persistently failed to end on time' (Fredriksen, 21). For Christians, then, temporal experience is dependent both on the actions which drive their linear advancement toward God and on the perpetual delay of the second coming which necessitates passivity and the acceptance of an unavoidable and perpetual delay. Both action and delay are, therefore, inherent to the structure of Christian temporality.

Similarly, as well as being premised on the acceptance of cyclicity and a rejection of the possibility of linear advancement, classical temporal philosophy is also used to define the need for an individual's commitment to active progression in the early modern period. In *Physics*, Aristotle, whose temporal philosophy was perhaps as influential as Plato's in early modern Europe, argues against his teacher's assertion that time is merely the repetitive motion of a cyclically defined human existence, by suggesting that time is the way we *measure* motion. 'By Aristotle's definition', Catherine Rau suggests, 'time is "number of motion according to before and after"' (Rau, 23). Time cannot exist independently of motion, because when change does not occur, we are not aware of the passing of time. Thus Aristotle brings humanity into the equation by asking whether time can exist if the mind of man does not: 'he regarded time as not merely succession but

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<sup>42</sup> Bernard McGinn, 'John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 3-19 (p. 11).

“succession in so far as it is numbered”, and nothing can be numbered unless there is someone to do the counting’ (Whitrow, 49). It is the *actions* of mankind which define temporal experience for Aristotle. Similarly, other classical conceptions of time constantly pull early modern thinkers between action and delay. As Cathy Yandell suggests, the Neoplatonic devaluation of humankind’s action through time is countered by the Epicurean celebration of the instant, and, as I have suggested, by Aristotle’s conception of time as the measurement of movement (Yandell, 25). Whereas Stoicism encourages passivity, early modern Humanism itself is driven by the desire, as exemplified by Petrarch and his obsession with the scheduling of time, to use time to its fullest potential and to cram every moment with productive action. Thus classical temporality, like Christian temporality, simultaneously advocated both a passive acceptance of deferral and a commitment to dynamic human action in the early modern period.

My consideration of the ‘early modern temporal consciousness’ suggests it is dominated by the binary opposition of action and delay. This binary works to pit time the destroyer against time the revealer and Christian against classical temporal philosophies. However, as I have shown, the binary of action and delay works against itself and thus also destabilises these oppositions because the various strands of the ‘early modern temporal consciousness’ I have explored – time as destroyer, time as revealer, classical and Christian time – all *simultaneously* advocate *both* action and delay. Furthermore, the concepts of action and delay are themselves inherently conflicted. In early modern lexicons, delay is defined as both a prevention of action and a profusion of action. It is both ‘a stay, lingering, protraction [. . .] deferring or driuing off; a pause, a space, an intermission’, and is used to describe a ‘dilation, enlarging or ouerspreading’.<sup>43</sup> It is both a denial of action and a

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<sup>43</sup> Randle Cotgrave, *A dictionarie of the French and English tongues. Compiled by Randle Cotgrave. Whereunto is also annexed a most copious dictionarie, of the English set before the French.* By R.S. L

copiousness which is akin to too much action. Similarly, action itself is defined as a ‘deed, exploit, enterprise’ and yet it is also used to describe something which ‘plunges, or hinders from proceeding’.<sup>44</sup> Actions can work to delay and delays can be defined by action. As I will argue in this thesis, exploring the construction of gender through this dual temporality and the tensions it produces – both forward and backward looking, both waiting and not waiting – can work to force a recognition of the inherent instability of both the binary oppositions of action / delay and of male / female in early modern society.

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(London, 1611), ‘Delay’, 2A2v; John Florio, *A worlde of wordes, or Most copious, and exact dictionarie in Italian and English, collected by Iohn Florio* (London, 1598), ‘Dilation’, I3v.

<sup>44</sup> See Cotgrave: ‘Action’, B5r, ‘Accul’, B6v.

### **iii      The temporalities of gender in medical and conduct literature**

The literature of early modern patriarchal society commonly presents an inherent masculine authority which necessarily controls a ‘natural’ feminine tendency toward subversion. In this thesis, I am interested in examining how the conflicted binary opposition of action and delay which I have described as dominating the ‘early modern temporal consciousness’ both aligns with and posits a challenge against that framework of gendered difference. Patricia Parker’s work on dilation suggests that male authority is associated with action and female subversion with delay in early modern texts. She describes the delay which is an implicit component of the early modern concept of dilation as a ‘specifically feminine plot’ which impedes both male sexual and social satisfaction (Parker, ‘Dilation’, 528). Male authorised action opposed to female subversive delay is indeed one of the key intersections of the axes of gender and time in early modern England and one which I return to throughout this thesis. However, the instability of the binary opposition between action and delay (both delay and action are, as I have suggested, presented as *both* authorised and subversive), leads me to suggest that this cannot be the only way in which the axes of time and gender engage with one another on the early modern stage. Can men be presented as authorised in their delay in the same way that women, unquestionably, can be presented as subversive in their action? It is the multiplicity of the possible configurations of time and gender which form the focus of my analysis of early modern drama in this thesis. Before I come to the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean stage, however, I examine the variety of alignments and misalignments of action and delay, male and female, particularly in relation to the definition of femininity, that are presented in the conduct and medical literature of the period and which form the backdrop for the dramatic presentations of the temporally gendered identities analysed throughout this thesis.

Early modern medical texts defined the male foetus as more complete than the female. Women were considered to be the by-product of a defective generative process; a lack of heat prevented an unborn child from externalising the genitalia which signified developmental fulfilment in the womb. Men, therefore, were presented as fully formed and women were considered malformed and unfinished. Thus the early modern medical discourse defined masculinity in terms of completion. This conception of maleness as completeness drew heavily on both Aristotle, who wrote that of all the animals, it is man who 'has the most perfect nature', and Galen, who considered man to be 'more perfect than the woman' and the 'primary instrument' of human endeavour.<sup>45</sup> Although perfection in the early modern period carried with it a sense of continual development, of 'nearly approaching such a state' of 'complete excellence', it also signified completion, a sense of being '[c]ompletely formed, finished, or made' and the Oxford English Dictionary suggests that the word was commonly used to describe 'offspring, esp. at birth' as 'fully formed'.<sup>46</sup> In a Latin / English dictionary from 1587, for example, 'concludo' is defined as to 'conclude, finish, determine, or make perfect'.<sup>47</sup> Thus through their perfection, men are presented as having achieved an ending before they have even been born.

In a patriarchal and teleologically ordered society, the perfect completion of the masculine body as presented by the influential physiological works of Galen and Aristotle justifies male domination. The superiority of manhood was built on this connection between masculinity, perfection and positive action. Because men are conceived as complete, they are authorised to act. Masculinity is defined temporally; men's perfection empowers them to act through time and that action in turn confirms their authority. The

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<sup>45</sup> Kate Aughterson, ed., *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 44, 47.

<sup>46</sup> *OED Online*, perfect, *adj.*<sup>1</sup>.1.b, *adj.*<sup>1</sup>.3.a, *adj.*<sup>1</sup>.3.c

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Thomas, *Dictionarium linguae Latinae et Anglicanae In hoc opere quid sit praestitum, & ad superiores lexikographos adiectum, docebit epistola ad lectorem* (London, 1587), N3r.

early modern man is defined both by his completion *in utero* and by the actions his perfection authorises him to take as he journeys through life. Although a variety of hierarchies of masculinity, including age, social status and nationality worked to define authoritative manhood in early modern England, the binary of gendered opposition was foundational and was, as I have suggested, figured temporally. Physical completion was both the result of and yet also enabled male authoritative action, and as such positively defined dominant masculinity.

Throughout his life, early modern man is presented as active in contrast with the incomplete and, as I shall go on to suggest, delayed and delaying early modern woman. At the pinnacle of his masculine authority, the married master of the household is expected to dominate his wife, children and servants. This domination is assured through the active role he takes as the head of the family unit. As this passage from Dod and Cleaver's marital conduct book, *A godly forme of houshold government*, first published in 1598, makes clear, the duties of the husband are dependent on his action:

The duty of the husband is to get goods: and of the wife to gather them together, and saue them. The duty of the husband is to trauell abroad to seeke liuing: and the wiues dutie is to keepe the house. The duty of the husband is to get money and prouision: and of the wiues, not vainely to spend it. The dutie of the husband is to deale with many men: and of the wife to talke with few. The duty of the husband is, to be intermedling: and of the wife, to be solitarie and withdrawne. The duty of the man is, to be skilfull in talke: and of the wife to boast of silence. The duty of the husband is, to be a giuer; and of the wife to be a sauer [. . .] The dutie of the husband is, to be Lord of all: and of the wife, to giue account of all.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Dod and Cleaver's conduct book went through nine editions between 1598 and 1630. All quotes are taken from the 1621 edition. John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A godly forme of houshold government for the ordering of priuate families, according to the direction of Gods word : wherunto is adioyned in a more particular manner, the seuerall duties of the husband towards his wife, and the wiues dutie towards her husband, the parents dutie towards their children, and the childrens towards their parents, the maisters dutie towards his seruants, and also the seruants duty towards their maisters / first gathered by R.C.; and now newly perused, amended and augmented by Iohn Dod and Robert Cleuer* (London, 1621), L3v-L4r.

The actions the husband takes which define his masculine authority are directly balanced against the denial of action which signifies chaste, silent and obedient femininity. As Alexandra Shepard suggests, '[t]he primary duties of both spouses were directed towards maintaining the husband's authority'.<sup>49</sup> The husband acts to assert his authority, the wife accepts her subservience by displaying her passivity; the positive and dynamic actions of his role are balanced by the negative and submissive rejections of action which define hers. Within the family unit, men's work was valued above women's work. By presenting the duties of the husband as being of greater importance than those of the wife, conduct literature 'reinforced associations of manhood with authority, acquisition, discretion, and negotiation and denied women's possession of such skills and rights to independent action' (Shepard, 77).

Accusing a man of effeminacy in the early modern period meant accusing him of inaction. As Antony Fletcher has argued, '[e]ffeminacy was avoided by manly activities, by the physical exercise through which men proved to themselves and each other that theirs was the stronger sex'.<sup>50</sup> N. H. Keeble suggests that '[t]he dynamic virtues are masculine, the passive feminine. Courage, magnanimity and authority belong to men; bashfulness, reticence and obedience to women'.<sup>51</sup> In his essay, 'The Masculine Birth of Time' of c. 1603, Francis Bacon, as G. J. Whitrow argues, makes it clear that the passivity of feminine temporality would, in the new scientific world, be surpassed by the positive action of a masculine temporality: 'Truth was regarded by Bacon as the "feminine birth of time", whereas by the "masculine birth of time" he meant active intervention in the world amounting to an exercise of power over nature' (Whitrow, 134). Time as revealer of truth,

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<sup>49</sup> Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; repr. 2006), p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> Antony Fletcher, *Gender, sex and subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995; repr. 1999), p. 94.

<sup>51</sup> N. H. Keeble, ed., *The cultural identity of seventeenth-century woman: a reader* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 96.

defined as I have suggested, on one level at least, by delay and the rejection of action, is presented by Bacon as feminine, whereas scientific endeavour is figured as particularly masculine. Rob Iliffe argues that for Bacon ‘the conventional wisdom was that truth was the daughter of time’, however, Iliffe also suggests Bacon rejects this temporal positioning in order to suggest that ‘humanity now had a duty to grasp the present and prepare the way for a redemptive future’.<sup>52</sup> As well as criticising the works of Aristotle (‘that worst of sophists’ who ‘made us slaves of words’), Plato (‘that swelling poet, that deluded theologian’ whose vagueness ‘took men’s minds off their guard and weakened their mental sinews’) and Galen (‘the narrow-minded [. . .] who deserted the path of experience and took to spinning idle theories of causation’), he takes particular umbrage against Paracelsus, who he accuses of instigating ‘obscurities and adventitious delays’ against the development of experiential research.<sup>53</sup> Bacon’s criticism of these thinkers associates them with feminised delay. Aristotle uses too many words, Plato is a ‘swelling’ poet, and Galen is idle: women, as I shall go on to explore, are defined in terms of their verbosity, their dilation, and their laziness in the early modern period. His vision for the future of natural philosophy disregards these philosophers’ works by positioning them in a delayed, feminine past, whereas his vision promotes an active, masculine future in which men will not simply wait passively for ‘truth’ to be revealed, but will take positive action to force it into the light.

Bacon’s association of ineffectual passivity with the delays of dilation and idleness draws on the ‘one-sex’ model which lay at the heart of both Aristotle’s and Galen’s conceptualisations of the physical body and the reproductive process. As I will go on to explore in more detail, by 1600, this model was beginning to be challenged by advances in

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<sup>52</sup> Rob Iliffe, ‘The masculine birth of time: temporal frameworks of early modern natural philosophy’, *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 33.4 (2000), 427–453 (p. 442).

<sup>53</sup> Francis Bacon, ‘The Masculine Birth of Time or Three Books on The Interpretation of Nature’, in *The Philosophy of Francis Bacon: An essay on its development from 1603 to 1609 with new translations of fundamental texts*, ed. by Benjamin Farrington (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964; repr. 1966), pp. 60–72 (pp. 63, 64, 66).



anatomical understanding, however, Galen's and Aristotle's positioning of females as less perfect or in fact 'deformed' males continued to form the basis of many considerations of gender difference by authors of medical tracts well into the seventeenth century (Aughterson, 47). The 'one-sex' model played a key role in shaping the way early modern men and women thought about their bodies and social identities throughout the period. Both Galen and Aristotle argued that 'woman is less fully developed than man', that she is incomplete; women are 'the result of a generative event not carried through to its final conclusion'.<sup>54</sup> In Galen and Aristotle's works, women are not different in kind from men, only in degree. They are less perfect because less complete than their male counterparts. It is the consideration of women as somehow incomplete men which is of key importance to the ideas I develop in this thesis. The incomplete woman, I suggest through my analysis of early modern physiology in this section, is the delayed woman. Her incompleteness and imperfection has a temporal dimension.

Galenic humoral theory dominated considerations of the physical body in the early modern period and placed men and women on a sliding scale of gender differentiation. As Anthony Fletcher suggests, '[no] sharp distinction between the sexes was possible in a physiological system that worked on the basis of fungible fluids' (Fletcher, *Gender*, 44). The four 'fungible' fluids which Galen suggested dominated the human body – blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm – corresponded with four physical qualities – hot, dry, cold and moist – and were considered to be in a constant state of flux. However, this sliding scale also worked to confirm the polarities of masculinity and femininity as they were conceived in the early modern period. Women were considered to be generally moist and cold, whereas men were often hot and dry. In *On the usefulness of parts of the body*, Galen argues firstly that 'the man is more perfect than the woman' and secondly that 'it is no

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<sup>54</sup> Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance notion of woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 8, 30.

wonder that the female is less perfect than the male by as much as she is colder than he' (Aughterson, 47). This coldness prevents her from developing fully in the womb.

Describing the female genitalia, which as a result of his work were commonly considered to be an inversion of the male genitalia, Galen writes that 'the parts were formed within her when she was still a foetus, but could not because of the defect in heat emerge and project on the outside' (Aughterson, 47-8). Thus for Galen woman is an unfinished man; she is 'less perfect than one that is complete in all respects' (Aughterson, 48).

In line with Galen, Aristotle's *The History of Animals* similarly presents women as under-developed, or as he calls them, 'deformed' men (Aughterson, 47). For Aristotle, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford suggest, woman is 'an error in creation, or an imperfect version of the male'.<sup>55</sup> *The History of Animals* argues that the female is unable to make sperm because she is too cold: 'The female, in fact, is female on account of inability of a sort, viz. it lacks the power to concoct semen out of the final state of the nourishment [. . .] because of the coldness of its nature' (Aughterson, 46). Women do not have enough generative heat to turn their blood into sperm; Aristotle describes menstrual blood as deficient and residual semen. Whereas '[t]he male provides the "form" and the "principle of movement"', the female provides the body, in other words, the material' (Aughterson, 46).

Although Galen and Aristotle correspond in their consideration of women as degenerate and incomplete versions of men, it is on this issue of reproduction which their physiologies fundamentally diverge. Aristotle writes that women contribute nothing to reproduction apart from the material of menstrual blood and the habitat of the womb.

Galen, on the other hand, argues that women *do* produce their own semen which actively contributes to the creation of the foetus. Although he attributes women with an active role

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<sup>55</sup> Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in early modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; repr. 2003), p. 19.

in conception, Galen still defines the female contribution as ‘less perfect’ than the male: ‘the female must have smaller, less perfect testes, and the semen generated in them must be scantier, colder and wetter (for these things too follow of necessity from the deficient heat)’ (Aughterson, 48). Thus if the female semen dominates, the lack of heat creates a female foetus. Galen’s theory of sex determination was generally accepted post-1600; most physicians who write about conception in the seventeenth century suggest that women contribute their own semen, however weak and imperfect that semen may be.

The view that women’s organs performed their own necessary and unique functions was dominant by the turn of the sixteenth century as a result of anatomical research which worked to challenge the previously accepted notion of correlative male and female anatomies. Gabriele Falloppio’s *Observationes Anatomicae* was published in 1561, and was the first medical text to officially identify the clitoris. As a result of Falloppio’s ‘discovery’, the clitoris began to be written about in medical tracts as the female counterpart of the penis, thus challenging Galen and Aristotle’s conceptualisation of the *womb* as an inversion of the penis. As Anthony Fletcher suggests, ‘[i]n this new context the uterus, no longer an inferior organ, receives proper recognition and even admiration for its role in reproduction’ (Fletcher, *Gender*, 36).<sup>56</sup>

Helkiah Crooke’s *Mikrokosmographia*, first published in 1615, illustrates these competing anatomical and humoral theories at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Crooke, for example, accepts that the clitoris corresponds with the penis, calling it the

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<sup>56</sup> Despite the anatomical breakthroughs of the late sixteenth century, for much of the seventeenth century the womb was popularly conceived as being an incomplete or defective penis and the ovaries as partially or malformed testes. For example, Jane Sharp’s *The midwives book* which was published in 1671, describes the determination of gender in the womb as follows: ‘the parts are either thrust forth by heat, or kept in for want of heat; so a woman is not so perfect as a Man, because her heat is weaker’. Jane Sharp, *The midwives book, or, The whole art of midwifry discovered. Directing childbearing women how to behave themselves in their conception, breeding, bearing, and nursing of children in six books, viz. ... / By Mrs. Jane Sharp practitioner in the art of midwifry above thirty years* (London, 1671), D5r.

‘womans yard’.<sup>57</sup> This enables him to write about the womb and its unique and crucial contribution to sexual reproduction. He rejects Aristotle’s view of women as ‘nothing else but an error or aberration of nature’ and similarly rejects what he considers to be Galen’s conceptualisation of the female as ‘a creature lame, occasionall and accessory, as if she were not of the mayne, but made by the bye’ (Crooke, 2A4r). Crooke tells his readers directly that ‘we must not thinke that the female is an imperfect male differing onely in the position of the genitals’, arguing that ‘[n]ature aswell intendeth the generation of a female as of a male’ (Crooke, 2A4r).

However, Crooke’s thesis does not totally disregard the Galenic and Aristotelian traditions. Although he does not see the womb as a defective and inverted penis, he does suggest that the fact that ‘womens Testicles are hidden within their bodies’ is an argument for the ‘couldnes of their Temper, because they want heate to thrust them forth’ (Crooke, 2A6v). Thus although Crooke suggests that nature *intends* the generation of women, he also seems to suggest that women are under-developed men. Although his text works to validate women’s role in reproduction to some extent, he is also very direct in his condemnation of women as the ‘wanton and petulant’ victims of the ‘impotencie of their minds’ (Crooke, 2A6v). For Crooke, this impotency makes them like ‘bruite beastes which haue no repugnancie or contradiction of reason to restraints them’ (Crooke, 2A6v).

Despite developments in anatomical research which seem to provide an authorised and active role for women in the reproductive process, women continue to be defined by their physicality as incomplete, imperfect, and as I suggest, delayed, in the early modern period. The underdeveloped female is temporally behind the perfected male; she is

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<sup>57</sup> Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia a description of the body of man. Together with the controuersies thereto belonging. Collected and translated out of all the best authors of anatomy, especially out of Gasper Bauhinus and Andreas Laurentius. By Helkiah Crooke Doctor of Physicke, physitian to His Maiestie, and his Highnesse professor in anatomy and chyrurgerie. Published by the Kings Maiesties especiall direction and warrant according to the first integrity, as it was originally written by the author* (London, 1615), X5v.

insufficient and inferior. As N. H. Keeble suggests, the differences between Galen and Aristotle as they are represented by Crooke are relatively inconsequential, in that across all medical texts '[w]oman was distinguished from man less by her difference than by her insufficiency: she is an inferior or lesser or incomplete man' (Keeble, 18). The fact that women are considered developmentally delayed is made clear through early modern considerations of gender transformation. There were accounts in circulation across Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of women in moments of heated exertion or excitement turning into men by expelling the sexual organs which resided within them. As Stephen Orgel suggests, '[t]hose transformations [. . .] only work in one direction, from female to male, which is conceived to be upward, toward completion'.<sup>58</sup> Women can attain perfection by developing into males, but it would be impossible for a man to regress into the underdeveloped female state. As Ian Maclean suggests, 'what is perfect is unlikely to change into that which is less so' (Maclean, 39). This quest for perfection is clearly gendered in Castiglione's *The Courtier*, in which Gaspar, the misogynist detractor, declares that '[g]enerallye everye woman wisheth she were a man, by a certein provocation of nature, that teacheth her to wishe for her perfection'.<sup>59</sup>

Thus women are defined as delayed in that there is always the potential for their 'completion' through their transformation into men. This completion can be in part achieved through transvestism. As Linda Woodbridge suggests, 'for a man to behave like a woman was shameful, but for a woman to behave like a man, while unnatural, was at least a step up – into the mannerisms of the higher-caste sex' (Woodbridge, 157). The majority

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<sup>58</sup> Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: the performance of gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; repr. 1997), p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womanhood, 1540-1620* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p. 56. This text provides an excellent survey of the 'formal controversy' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and I draw on Woodbridge's readings of the conduct literature of the period throughout this section of the introduction.

of women, whose sexual organs never ‘thrust outward’ in order to realise the *ultimate* transformation, persist, therefore in a state of delayed development.

As well as being delayed physiologically, women in the early modern period are presented as ‘delayed’ in their behaviour. Women are considered to be lazy, dull and naturally inclined to inaction. As Maclean suggests, the ‘female propensity to sin and to indolence breathes through even the tracts of enlightened humanists like Agrippa, Vives and Erasmus’ (Maclean, 65). Within the tradition of literary attacks on and defences of women which was wide-spread in Europe in the late middle ages and throughout the early modern period, and within the ‘formal controversy’ as defined by Linda Woodbridge, which flourished in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, women are accused of being both lethargic and idle, which I suggest is a manifestation of their physically ‘delayed’ development. In an Italian treatise published in translation in England in 1599, *Of mariage and wiuing*, Hercules Tasso begins a long catalogue of women’s characteristics with a declaration that women are ‘sleepie & heauie: sluggish & slowe: slothfull & dull: vnmindful & forgetfull: simple & sottish: cold & chilly’.<sup>60</sup> Tasso’s misogyny is, first and foremost, focused on women’s listless inaction. The idle woman is also an object of derision in one of the key treatises of the *querelle des femmes*, Joseph Swetnam’s *The arraignment of lewd, idle, froward, and vnconstant women*, published in 1615. Idleness is such an important facet of female depravity that it warrants a place in Swetnam’s title. In this work, that idleness is crucially linked with female material consumption. Swetnam argues that women do nothing while their husbands struggle to maintain them: ‘Man must

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<sup>60</sup> Hercules Tasso and Torquato Tasso, *Of mariage and wiuing An excellent, pleasant, and philosophical controuersie, betweene the two famous Tassi now liuing, the one Hercules the philosopher, the other, Torquato the poet. Done into English, by R.T. Gentleman* (London, 1599), C4r.

be all the cost and yet liue by the losse, a man must take all the paines, and women will spend all the gaines'.<sup>61</sup>

Swetnam's *The araignment* defines a paradox which is central to my consideration of the temporal presentation of gender in the early modern period. Women, for Swetnam, are idle, but that idleness is manifest in their insatiable greed; they do nothing *except* spend their husbands' money. Thus women's *inaction* is inextricably linked to the *action* of material consumption. This paradox is apparent in one of the first texts of the formal controversy, *A Dyalogue defensyue for women*, possibly by Robert Vaughan, which was published in 1542. In this dialogue, women are defined as simultaneously 'lazy and extravagant'; they both refuse to act, and act too much (Woodbridge, 23). A popular proverb of the period also reflects this sentiment, stating that women 'have but two faults, they can neither do well nor say well'.<sup>62</sup> They are subversive if they 'do' (act), and they are subversive if they 'say' (delay action with words). Furthermore, as I shall go on to explore, the action of material consumption is associated with the subversive action of innate female lasciviousness. Nicholas Breton, in his treatise *The good and the badde* of 1616, describes the 'wanton Woman' as leading a life which is a 'play of idlenesse'.<sup>63</sup> In these texts the inaction of idleness paradoxically defines the subversive actions of both excessive material consumption and of sexual impropriety. Ultimately, women's physiological tendency toward delay defines them as subversive, as *deniers* of delay – that is, as whores and shrews. In the early modern period, the delayed development of the female foetus was paradoxically presented as creating women who were naturally prone to subversive *action*.

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<sup>61</sup> Joseph Swetnam, *The araignment of lewd, idle, froward, and vnconstant women or the vanitie of them, choose you whether: with a commendation of wise, vertuous and honest women : pleasant for married men, profitable for young men, and hurtfull to none* (London, 1615), C4r.

<sup>62</sup> Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of The Proverbs in England In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1950; repr. 1966), p. 748.

<sup>63</sup> Nicholas Breton, *The good and the badde, or Descriptions of the worthies, and vnworthies of this age Where the best may see their graces, and the worst discern their basenesse* (London, 1616), E2r-E2v.

As Anthony Fletcher argues, women's 'moral inferiority', which I suggest in this section was manifest in the impious actions which defined the socially subversive roles of the whore and the shrew, 'was a reflection of their status in Aristotelian theory as imperfect men' (Fletcher, *Gender*, 72). The delayed development which dominated the physiological conceptualisation of femininity did not necessarily mean that women were defined as fragile or passive:

The weakness of the female so much insisted upon was construed in physical and intellectual terms, as want of strength and judgement, not in psychological terms, as want of character. Women's characters were in no way deemed to be weak. On the contrary, their unruly temperaments were known to be stronger than their wills could control.

(Keeble, 71)

As Keeble makes clear, it is not that women are incapable of action, more that they are incapable of any moral or virtuous action. Women's 'innate wilfulness, deceitfulness, cunning and lasciviousness were proverbial throughout the century'; that is, the inherent female propensity for subversion is far from inactive (Keeble, 71). Because they are not fully formed in the womb, women were considered to be unable to control their 'natural' desires. As Ian Maclean suggests, woman 'has a tendency to vice' and 'less impulsion to virtue because of weaker powers of reason and judgement', and those weaker powers are presented as being the result of her failure to reach perfection *in utero* (Maclean, 51). Much of the literature of the period suggested that women would naturally behave like whores and shrews if left to their own devices; they are presented as innately lascivious and domineering. Stephen Orgel argues that 'in this culture femininity is not equated with docility – on the contrary, what is feared in women is their violent and uncontrollable appetites' (Orgel, 28). Because they are developmentally delayed, women are paradoxically presented as inherently prone to subversive action.



Debate about the nature of women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries relentlessly presented the female sex as naturally lascivious; women were considered to be driven by their sexual desires. In conduct literature and the literature which constituted the formal controversy, women are accused of having a ‘propensity to sensuality’; they were considered to be naturally and ‘incontinently lustful’ (Maclean, 64, Woodbridge, 177). In one of the first classical orations of the formal controversy, *The scole house of women*, printed around 1542, Edward Gosynhyll attacks women by suggesting they are ‘farre more lecherous’ than men.<sup>64</sup> Gosynhyll bemoans that the adjuncts of sexual appetite in women are their ‘[l]ooking-glass vanity and extravagant adornment’ (Woodbridge, 27). The licentiousness of women in the early modern period is presented as a concomitant of an ‘economically destructive lust [. . .] for riches and luxury’ (Maclean, 60). As I have suggested, both female idleness and sexual immorality are defined by active material consumption.

Women’s subversion as shrews was also thought to be born of their delayed imperfection. ‘The idea that women’s shrewishness related to their weakness of mind and will’, Anthony Fletcher suggests, ‘seems to have been commonly accepted’ (Fletcher, *Gender*, 77). The shrew’s subversion is manifest in her rebellious action; their physical and verbal abuse of their husbands. As the Protestant preacher Thomas Becon, in a collection of his works printed in 1564, suggests, ‘their whole delight and pleasure is to scold, to brawl, to chide, and to be out of quiet with their husbands’ (Aughterson, 29). Thus, talking in this instance is a subversive action itself, one which works to delay the virtuous action of the shrew’s husband.

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<sup>64</sup> Edward Gosynhyll, *Here begynneth the scole house of women wherein euery man may reade a goodly prayse of the condicyons of women* (London, 1560), B2v.

The action of the unruly female – the whore and the shrew – in early modern society is presented as subversive by virtue of the fact that it *delays* men. The sexual deviance of women delays men with sex and the marital domination of shrews prevents men from fulfilling their own active role as head of the family. As Patricia Parker has argued, Renaissance writers would have inherited from classical and biblical sources a concept of the ‘female enchantress or obstacle en route to completion and ending’ (Parker, *Literary*, 11). ‘[F]emale obstructers’, she argues, ‘are the chief perpetrators of delay’ in many classical narratives (Parker, *Literary*, 13). The figure of the sexually desiring woman as an enchantress who prevents men from fulfilling their goals by luring them off course with the promise of sex, is a common conceit in the conduct literature and the literature of the formal controversy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Edward Gosynhyll argues that women ‘lure men by certain tricks’ into sex, and that the material trappings of their femininity are ‘intended mainly to allure’ (Woodbridge, 26, 27). Similarly, George Turberville’s *Epitaphes, epigrams, songs and sonets* of 1567 dedicates an entire section to the critique of women who ‘allure and loue not’.<sup>65</sup> These women, he claims, have ‘beautie to allure, | and murder with disdaine’ (Turberville, J3r). Joseph Swetnam continues this conceptualisation of women into the Jacobean period, presenting them as ‘[s]irens’ who ‘allure’ men to destruction (Swetnam, B2v).

The figure of woman as temptress drew on strong biblical precedents in the early modern period. In Proverbs, the ‘harlot [. . .] lieth in wait at every corner’ (Proverbs, 7.10, 12). Joseph Swetnam uses this biblical misogyny in *The arraignment* to present women as temptresses:

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<sup>65</sup> George Turberville, *Epitaphes, epigrams, songs and sonets with a discourse of the friendly affections of Tymetes to Pyndara his ladie. Newlie corrected with additions, and set out by George Tuberville Gentleman* (London, 1567), J2r.

women haue a thousand waies to entise thee, and ten thousand  
waies to deceiue thee, and all such fooles as are sutors vnto them [. . .]  
some they delay with dalliances, and some they please with  
kisses: they lay out the foldes of their haire, to entangle men into  
their loue; betwixt their brests is the vale of destruction, and in their  
beds there is hell, sorrow & repentance.

(Swetnam, C4r-C4v)

Christopher Newstead, in *An Apology for Women* published in 1620, suggests that '[i]t is true, at first, when there was but two actors upon this theatre of the world, woman was the siren that allured man unto evil' (Aughterson, 115). It seems even those intent on exercising their rhetorical skill in the defence of women could not help but acknowledge her role as delaying temptress. It is Eve's intemperate action – 'her greed, her insatiability', and ultimately her temptation of Adam – which forces mankind out of the atemporal, non-teleological garden of Eden (Boesky, 128). As Amy Boesky suggests, in the early modern consciousness Eve 'was to blame for Time' (Boesky, 128). I argue that not only did Eve condemn humankind to a mortal existence, as Boesky suggests, she also creates the concept of delay. Eve's action has the ultimate delaying effect. She forces men and women to persist through a teleological existence characterised by the delay of salvation: the delay of the return to paradise which will be realised with the second coming. By *acting* to eat the apple, Eve doesn't just delay Adam, she delays the whole of humankind. Thus the inherent subversion of women was constructed in the early modern period through both classical and Christian ideologies. Aristotle and Galen's accounts of women's delayed development worked in conjunction with the biblical example of Eve's temptation to produce an image of woman defined by weakness and imperfection. Within both classical and Christian frames of reference, women's developmental delay makes them idle, and also paradoxically makes them act subversively, which, furthermore, works to delay men.

If women, as I have suggested, are presented in the literature of the early modern period as *naturally* and subversively active (a result, paradoxically, of their developmental

delay), then the passive identity of the ‘good’ woman – chaste, silent and obedient – is consequently presented as necessarily *enforced* through the institution of marriage. Paradoxically, delay defines female subversion, yet it is by enforcing the delayed identities of virtuous femininity – chastity and patience – that subversive female delay is mastered. The notion that women were ‘weaker, inferior and in need of masculine guidance’ was common, and it was generally believed that the natural inclination to active subversion which defined femininity could be controlled through marriage and subjection to a husband (Keeble, ix). Thus delay is used in these texts not only to suggest female subversion, but to define authorised and virtuous femininity.

The rhetoric of marital conduct literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries presents the passivity and subservience of the good wife as necessarily enforced. Because women are presented as *naturally* prone to lasciviousness and wilful disobedience, the identity of the obedient wife is one which must be socially conditioned; subservience in marriage, these texts suggest, is not an inherent attribute of femininity. Women in conduct manuals are presented as needing to ‘learn a set of behaviour defences to protect them from their own sinful ways’ (Fletcher, *Gender*, 382). For example, in *The Instruction of a Christen woman* published in the 1520s, Juan Luis Vives uses the work of Aristotle to recognise the natural propensity for young women to feel sexual arousal:

Aristotel doth bydde in his historie of the beastes, that is, that they kepe their daghters, speciallye when they begynne to growe from chyldes state, and holde them from mennes company. For that time they be gyven unto moste luste of the body.<sup>66</sup>

Women, he suggests, are not naturally chaste, but naturally desiring. As a result, Vives counsels that women must work to acquire the authorised female virtues of passivity which

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<sup>66</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *A very fruteful and pleasant boke callyd the Instruction of a Christen woman, made fyrste in latyne, by the right famous clerk mayster Lewes Viues, and tourned oute of latyne into Englysshe by Richard Hyrde* (London, 1541), F2r.

ensure their value within a patriarchal society. He suggests that '[a] WOMAN shal lerne the vertues of her kynde all to gether out of bokes, whiche she shall either rede herself, or elles here redde' (Vives, J4v). In order to *become* chaste and sober, she must 'applye herselfe to vertue' (Vives, Kv). Thomas Becon similarly stresses that it is the woman's duty to be subservient to her husband:

First it belongeth to a godly married woman to understand, that as God in his holy ordinance hath appointed the husband to be head ruler and governor of his wife: so likewise hath he ordained even from the beginning, that the wife should be in subjection and obedience to her own husband.

(Aughterson, 111)

She must accept that God has ordered her inferiority which is defined by her incompleteness and delay; she must learn to maintain her subservient position.

Much of the marital conduct literature of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries similarly suggests that women must work hard to quell their innate tendencies toward subversion and learn how to be good virgins, wives and widows. As Henry Smith counsels all prospective husbands in *A preparatiue to mariage*, women are naturally flawed, '[s]o hee must not looke to finde a wife without a fault, but thinke that she is committed to him to reclaime her from her faults; for all are defectiues'.<sup>67</sup> The naturally 'defective' female features in Dod and Cleaver's *A godly forme of houshold government*. Whereas Smith urges women to learn from their husbands, it is the word of God which Dod and Cleaver suggest can save wives from their innate tendency to subversive action:

The best meanes therefore that a wife can vse to obtaine and maintaine the loue and good liking of her husband, is to be silent, obedient, peaceable, patient, studious to appease his choler if he be angry, painefull, and diligent in looking to her businesse, to be solitary and honest. The chiefe and speciall cause why most women do faile in not performing this duty to their husbands is, because

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<sup>67</sup> Henry Smith, *A preparatiue to mariage The summe whereof was spoken at a contract, and enlarged after. Whereunto is annexed a treatise of the Lords Supper, and another of vsurie*. By Henrie Smith (London, 1591), Fr.

they be ignorant of the word of God, which teacheth the same and all other duties.

(Pr-Pv)

Women must work to appropriate the passive virtues of socially authorised femininity which both God and her husband instruct her in.

The paradox at the heart of this discourse literature is that in order to attain an authorised position within patriarchal society, women must *actively* strive to learn the skills of passive *inaction* which define the virtuous maid and wife. William Gouge illustrates this paradox in *Of domesticall duties*:

It is a good prooffe and triall of a wiues obedience, to abstaine from doing such things as otherwise she would doe, if her husbands contrarie will did not restraine her: but yet that is not sufficient, there must be an actiue, as well as a passiue obedience yeelded.<sup>68</sup>

The good wife, Gouge seems to suggest, must be active in her obedience; she must work hard to achieve the virtues of passivity and inaction which define authorised femininity in the early modern period. Thus it seems some action is authorised for women – the kind of action which maintains their subservience and promotes the authority of their husbands.

At the same time as these texts stress the importance of *enforcing* female passivity on women who are naturally prone to subversive action because they are developmentally delayed, they also promote the conceptualisation of women as *inherently* passive: naturally inclined to subservience because of their weaker bodies. The fact that women are conceived as developmentally delayed positions them as paradoxically both naturally subversive in their action (i.e. needing to have identities of passivity and obedience enforced), but also naturally authorised in their ‘delay’ (i.e. innately aware of their own inferiority). As Linda Woodbridge suggests, ‘Renaissance orthodoxy viewed women as *by nature* timid, passive, and tender of heart: the courageous, aggressive, and tough minded it typically regarded as

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<sup>68</sup> William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties eight treatises. I. An exposition of that part of Scripture out of which domesticall duties are raised. ... VIII. Duties of masters. By William Gouge.* (London, 1622), X6r.

unnatural' (Woodbridge, 214). William Whatley's tract *A bride-bush* makes it clear that women are naturally passive and obedient by suggesting that subversive shrews are 'monsters in natures'; their impudent refusal to be afraid of their husbands is labelled as an 'vnwomanhood'.<sup>69</sup> For Whatley, it is unnatural for women to want to challenge their husbands' authority.

The defences of women, which constitute the majority of the texts of the formal controversy, consistently reiterate women's natural and inherent virtue as passive, inactive maids and wives. In these texts there is a keen Aristotelian sense that

Man, more robust and audacious, is better suited for a peripatetic, outdoor, public, acquisitive rôle; woman, more timid, possessing judgment and physical force in lesser measure, is naturally custodian of children, household goods and the acquisitions of her husband.

(Maclean, 57)

Women are considered to be physically weaker because of their delayed development in the womb, therefore they are naturally inclined to a more passive role in the running of the household. The virtues they are presented as naturally possessing – 'longsuffering, humility, patience, compassion' – may seem to afford women with some kind of moral superiority, but actually only work to maintain that passivity and inaction (Maclean, 20). For example, in *The Courtier*, Gaspar, the misogynist, exclaims that '[i]t is not comlye for a woman to practice feates of armes, ridinge, playenge at tenise, wrastling, and manye other thinges that beelonge to men' (Woodbridge, 55). These active pursuits are not considered suitable for 'naturally' passive women. Furthermore, this identity of passive delay which patriarchal society enforces on women to control them also works to frustrate male sexual satisfaction. As I will explore in more detail throughout this thesis and as I have suggested,

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<sup>69</sup> William Whatley, *A bride-bush, or A wedding sermon compendiously describing the duties of married persons: by performing whereof, marriage shall be to them a great helpe, which now finde it a little hell* (London, 1617), F2r, Fv.

whores delay men through their sexual action whereas virgins delay men through their refusal to act.

The texts considered in this section highlight fundamental contradictions in the temporal conceptualisation of femininity – and by extension, masculinity – in the period. In opposition to complete and perfect men, women are constructed as naturally delayed in their physical development, and are presented as having a propensity to be lazy, idle and inactive as a result. However, their delayed development is also credited with instigating the rebellions of naturally *active* female subversion; women are considered to be prone to lasciviousness and to wilful disobedience because of their ‘imperfect’ condition as malformed men. This subversive action, in turn, works to delay the virtuous quests of male social advancement. The ‘delayed’ attributes of virtuous femininity – chastity and patience – are therefore enforced in order to prevent this kind of subversively delaying female action. However, the legitimate delays of virtuous femininity also work to defer male sexual satisfaction and thus create the virgin as a subversive delaying agent of masculine authority.

Parker’s work identifies one particular intersection of the axes of time and gender; however my analysis of medical and conduct literature has suggested there are many more intersections of those axes to explore. My consideration of medical and conduct literature has exposed how women are not only defined as subversive by virtue of the fact that they delay men, but are also defined as inherently subversive as a result of their own delayed development. Parker identifies the figure of the sexual temptress who delays the virtuous male quest, however she does not explore the fact that it is through subversive female *action* that this delay is achieved. Neither does she comment on the fact that, through patience and virginity, delay is in fact used to define identities of authorised femininity in early modern society. I suggest the multiplicity of these temporally gendered social



identities reflects the inherently conflicted nature of the binary opposition between action and delay which I have argued is foundational to the 'early modern temporal consciousness'.

#### **iv      Patience, prodigality and revenge: gender and delay in early modern theatre**

My analysis of early modern conduct and medical literature has illustrated that the axes of time and gender did indeed intersect in the early modern period: the gendered identities of men and women are constructed temporally in a variety of different ways. The inherent instability of the binary opposition between action and delay which I have suggested was foundational to the 'early modern temporal consciousness' is employed to create multiple temporally gendered identities. The opposition of male authorised action and female subversive delay, although apparent, is only one of a number of different ways the binary oppositions of action and delay and of male and female are aligned and misaligned in these texts. However, ultimately the multiplicity of temporally gendered identities I have identified all work to perpetuate patriarchal order: women are subversive both in their action *and* in their delay.

In the rest of this thesis, I will explore how the play of temporal and gendered binaries of difference – action / delay, man / woman – is dramatised on the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century stage, specifically by way of the theologically defined concepts of patience, prodigality and revenge. The dramatic identities of the patient wife, the prodigal son / husband and the revenger, are a rich resource for my exploration of time and gender in that they are, as this thesis will demonstrate, both inherently gendered and fundamentally predicated on the negotiation of the binary opposition between action and delay. Ultimately, in this thesis I explore the ways in which the inherent instability of this binary opposition works to destabilise the polarities of gendered behaviour which were foundational to the construction of the early modern subject.

I begin with a chapter focused on *Hamlet* (1600-1601), a play notoriously concerned with delay. Chapter 1 identifies the ways in which the axes of time and of gender

interact in this play through the dramatic identities of the chaste, patient virgin, the prodigal and the revenging son. Through my analysis of patience, prodigality and revenge in Shakespeare's play, I suggest that gender is presented as temporally constructed in a variety of conflicting ways. Furthermore, I argue that through the multiplicity of intersections between the axes of time and gender, the concepts of patience, prodigality and revenge as they are presented in *Hamlet* work to destabilise patriarchal authority and the polarisation of male and female it is dependent upon.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 focus on patience, prodigality and revenge respectively. Each chapter explores the ways in which these concepts and the dramatic identities which draw on them negotiate the temporal binary opposition between action and delay which I argue is fundamental to the 'early modern temporal consciousness'. In all three chapters, I look at the ways in which the theatre of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries presents *both* action and delay as *both* authorised and subversive, and I explore how the conflict between these opposing temporal positions affects the gendering of characters in those plays. Furthermore, I establish how patience, prodigality and revenge as concepts inherently disrupt the binary oppositions of action and delay by simultaneously expressing both, and how, therefore, those concepts destabilise the distinction between male and female on the early modern stage.

In Chapter 2, I focus in detail on patience defined as an identity of specifically female authorised delay in domestic drama at the turn of the seventeenth century. I analyse the Griselda figure, particularly as she is presented in Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's *The pleasant comedie of Patient Grissill* (1600), to explore both how patience is figured as an identity of authorised female delay and conversely how patience can work to define women as subversively delaying men on the early modern stage. I consider how whores and shrews, in *Patient Grissill* and in parts one and two of *The honest whore* (1604, 1604-

c.1605) are temporally defined in opposition to the patient wife through their denial of the delays of virtuous femininity, and how their subversive actions are paradoxically presented as *delaying* men. I also analyse the dual temporality of patience as a virtue defined by both action and delay simultaneously and I conclude the chapter by examining the temporal and gendered anomalies of the patient husband and the honest whore.

Prodigality, like patience, engages with the binary opposition between action and delay in contrasting ways. In Chapter 3 I examine the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prodigal son as denier of delay: he is defined as subversive by his refusal to wait. However, I also suggest that his impatience works to confirm his active and authorised masculinity. Furthermore, my analysis of prodigal sons leads me to argue that the action of the prodigal's riotous living is paradoxically figured as a period of delay; prodigality is a rejection of social maturation which threatens to feminise the prodigal son as ineffectual. However, as I illustrate, the prodigal's inevitable conversion actually works to authorise the period of prodigality as one which *enables* men to mature, rather than one which prevents maturation. The figure of the prodigal son, I suggest, ultimately works to sustain the patriarchal authority of both men over women and of fathers over sons. Through my consideration of the prodigal *husband* in the domestic comedies of the Jacobean stage, I outline the ways in which prodigality as a temporally ambiguous concept allows for the creation of gendered ambiguity in early modern drama. I end this chapter with a consideration of 'female prodigals' on the Jacobean stage.

In Chapter 4, I analyse the ways in which revenge as it is presented in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean tragedy is also defined by a dual temporality. Revenge necessitates both action and delay: it is defined by both waiting and not waiting. I suggest the figure of the revenger at the turn of the century is both patient and prodigal and I examine how revenge is condemned as a subversive action, yet also how it can work to

confirm masculine authority. I explore the presentation of acts of female revenge which are defined by delay as either ineffectual or particularly cruel. To conclude, I consider how early modern theatre works to preserve both patriarchal authority and the necessity of Christian patience by defining the men of these plays as authorised in their delay and the women as subversive in their action.

Finally, by turning away, ostensibly, from drama to life-writing – specifically to the life-writing of Lady Anne Clifford – I consider how one Jacobean woman engaged with the dramatic character-types of patience, prodigality and revenge in order to construct her own temporally gendered identity. In the same way that patience, prodigality and revenge provide the conceptual frames through which I have been able to explore the convergence of the axes of time and gender in early modern theatre, so they also provided Lady Anne with models of behaviour through which she was able to negotiate a subject position for herself which is both temporal and gendered. In her late-seventeenth-century life-writing, I suggest we see the ongoing influence of Elizabethan and early Jacobean drama, which I argue shaped the individual's understanding of the place of the gendered self within the framework of time.

Throughout this thesis, I will argue for the significance in early modern society of the temporal binary opposition between action and delay, a binary which, because of its inherent instability, constantly works to deconstruct itself on the early modern stage. I explore the ways in which the unstable opposition of action and delay intersects with the similarly unstable gendered axes of male / female in the domestic comedies and revenge tragedies of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean theatre. I suggest that the multiplicity of configurations of time and of gender – made manifest in the characters (and caricatures) of these plays – challenge the very binaries which produce them. By analysing the ways in

which the temporal and gendered axes are repeatedly aligned and misaligned, I suggest that both time and gender are presented as very much out of joint on the early modern stage.

## Chapter 1

### The delay's the thing: patience, prodigality and revenge in *Hamlet*

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <i>Laertes</i> | O thou vile King,<br>Give me my father.   |
| <i>Queen</i>   | Calmly, good Laertes.   |
| <i>Laertes</i> | That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,<br>Cries 'Cuckold!' to my father, brands the harlot<br>Even here between the chaste unsmirched brow<br>Of my true mother.<br>[. . .] |
| <i>King</i>    | Let him go, Gertrude<br>[. . .]<br>Let him go, Gertrude<br>[. . .]<br>Let him demand his fill <sup>1</sup>  |

In her essay '*Hamlet's Whores*', Kay Stanton refers to Laertes' outburst on his return from Paris as 'a totally needless and wanton implication of his mother', a mother mentioned here for the first and last time and who is, as Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor suggest in their footnote to this passage, 'evoked only in order to confirm her child's legitimacy' (Thompson & Taylor, 4.5.120n).<sup>2</sup> Rather than being needless, wanton, or merely instrumental, I suggest this passage foregrounds the complex interplay between the axes of gender and of time on the early modern stage: between men and women and between action and delay. The Queen bids Laertes be calm and physically restrains him, as Claudius' repeated requests that she '[l]et him go' suggest. The calmness that Gertrude demands is understood as contemptible *inaction* by Laertes, inaction which he argues is unnatural for a man in that it could only be the result of subversive female sexual *action*: the action of his mother's adultery. In his speech, therefore, Laertes links male inaction (a perversion of masculine agency and of the

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006; repr. 2007), 4.5.115-120, 122, 126, 128. All quotes are from this Q2 edition of the play, unless specified.

<sup>2</sup> Kay Stanton, '*Hamlet's Whores*', in *New essays on 'Hamlet'*, ed. by Mark Thornton Burnett and John Manning (New York: AMS Press, 1994), pp. 167-88 (p. 178).

call to filial revenge) with female action (a perversion of feminine patience and of fidelity in marriage). This exchange thus posits a direct correlation between unrestrained female sexuality and male impotence, between women acting rather than waiting and men being forced to wait as a result.

Laertes' words reveal that he subscribes to a commonly employed configuration of the axes of time and gender within early modern patriarchal society as outlined by Patricia Parker. This configuration aligns authorised masculinity with action and subversive femininity with the delay of men which is, paradoxically, the result of female sexual *action*. In this context, Laertes' lines immediately suggest a way to read Hamlet's relationship with Gertrude. As a woman who will not wait, her sexual impropriety and impulsive action in marrying Claudius result directly in her son's paralysis and his much-debated delay. In the same way that she physically restrains Laertes and enforces a calmness which he considers proclaims him a bastard, so Gertrude acts on Hamlet as a delaying agent through her 'hasty marriage' and the sexual action within it which destabilises her son's legitimate claim to the throne (2.2.57). These few lines from 4.5 of *Hamlet* therefore exemplify some of the temporal aspects of gendered identity which I have outlined in the introduction to this thesis. They provide me with my first dramatic example of the complicated gendering of the binary opposition between action and delay; Laertes, Gertrude, Claudius and by extension, Hamlet, are all sites for the intersection of the temporal and gendered axes.

In this chapter, I will explore how *Hamlet*, a play whose critical reception has been dominated by considerations of delay, engages with what I am positing are the multiple possible intersections of the axes of gender and of time in early modern society, intersections which I have suggested in my introduction inform the conduct books and medical literature of the period. The lines I have quoted from 4.5 of *Hamlet* highlight the three thematic concerns which I will use to structure this chapter and this thesis as a whole:



patience, prodigality and revenge. Laertes' mother is patience on a monument, Gertrude is the impatient whore, and Laertes himself is both the returned prodigal and the revenging son. In this chapter, I argue that *Hamlet* engages with the temporal construction of gender through the identities of the patient virgin, the prodigal son and the revenging son, and it is these identities, along with a variety of others, which I go on to consider in more detail in subsequent chapters through my exploration of domestic comedy and revenge tragedy on the early modern stage.

My analysis of *Hamlet* falls into four sections, the first three of which each tackle one of the thematic foci which I suggest are foundational to the dramatic presentation of the axes of gender and of time. Firstly, I consider patience in *Hamlet*, examining the construction of female gendered identity through both the authorised delay of chastity and the unauthorised actions of sexual subversion. Secondly, I explore prodigality in the play, considering how hierarchies of age as well as those of gender are dependent on negotiations of the action / delay binary. Thirdly, I examine the gendered identity of the revenger, who, being both patient and prodigal, opens up further possibilities for the conjunctions of male and female, action and delay, on the early modern stage. In the last section of the chapter, I look at some of the ways in which *Hamlet* multiplies the possible configurations of the axes of time and gender – for example by paradoxically presenting masculine prodigality as thrifty or female patience as wasteful – and in doing so actually works to deconstruct the binaries on which they are built.

i      **‘[C]ool patience’ and ‘wicked speed’: women waiting and not waiting<sup>3</sup>**

I begin by considering how women are represented through time in *Hamlet*. More specifically, I explore how time is used in this play to perpetuate the subjection of women in early modern patriarchal society. As I suggested in my introduction to this thesis, early modern women were considered to be naturally delayed in their physical development and therefore morally, emotionally and intellectually weaker vessels. As a result, they cannot be trusted to act with honour or judgement and therefore their potentially subversive action must be ‘delayed’. The subjection of women is thus achieved temporally through the imposition of identities of virtuous delay. These identities are premised on inaction: chastity, obedience, passivity and modesty are virtues which are presented as *naturally* female and which work to ensure female subordination within patriarchal society. As I suggest through my analysis of *Hamlet*, patience is a virtue of inaction through which drama and the society which creates that drama, delays, and therefore defines and controls, women.

In this section, I explore the ways in which Ophelia is presented as virtuous in *Hamlet* through the authorised delay of chastity. Her virginity, I argue, is associated with patience as a concomitant virtue of legitimised female delay. To preserve her patriarchally authorised identity Ophelia must, paradoxically, both resist and await with patience the inevitable moment when she is legitimised as a wife and is sexually mastered by a man in marriage. Thus through the delay which defines female virtue, and specifically through her dramatic association with the figure of Patient Griselda, Ophelia is created as a passive object of male exchange at the court of Elsinore. Furthermore, whereas Ophelia embodies authorised female delay, I suggest Gertrude embodies subversive female action in this play.

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<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3.4.120, 1.2.156.

I consider how Gertrude is created in opposition to Ophelia as an impatient whore, defined by a *denial* of the authorised delays of patience and therefore of chastity which Ophelia represents. I also suggest that both Ophelia's authorised delay and Gertrude's unauthorised action are ultimately positioned as delaying the masculine quest for social and sexual fulfilment.

I am not the first to associate Ophelia with Patient Griselda. In the nineteenth century, both the author Mary Cowden Clarke and the actress Helena Faucit, who played Ophelia opposite William Charles Macready's Hamlet, imagined prequel biographies for Ophelia which position her very much in line with the Griselda of legend. In *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines*, Cowden Clarke's 'The Rose of Elsinore' depicts Ophelia spending several years – a 'long tedious period of absence' – living in a peasant cottage in the country with the family of her former 'rustic nurse' Botilda, when her father is called away to Paris as ambassador and her mother is forced to accompany him.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Faucit imagines Ophelia as 'the motherless child of an elderly Polonius', left by her father 'to the kindly but thoroughly unsympathetic tending of country-folk', whose 'roughly-mannered and uncultured natures' are all the young girl knows until she is brought back to court to 'become a court lady' in her early teenage years.<sup>5</sup> 'When we first see her', Faucit suggests, 'we may fairly suppose that she has been only a few months at court. It has as yet taken off none of the bloom of her beautiful nature. That is as pure and fresh and simple as she brought it from her country home' (Faucit, 10). Clarke and Faucit share a desire to position Ophelia within the frame of the nineteenth century Bildungsroman; they both depict her as

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Cowden Clarke, *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines in A Series of Fifteen Tales*, 3 vols (London: W. H. Smith, 1850-1), II, pp. 187, 184.

<sup>5</sup> Helena Faucit, *On some of Shakespeare's female characters* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1885), pp. 9, 10.

raised (for a significant period of her childhood at least) amongst the peasantry, developing from innocent country girl to tragically manipulated courtly lady.

I suggest this imagined childhood of pastoral simplicity links Ophelia with Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's *Griselda*, the basket weaving 'poore Daughter' of a rural peasant, brought to court with her father to marry the Marquess.<sup>6</sup> Clarke and Faucit's delineation of a rural past for Ophelia places her within a setting of idyllic innocence, from which, mirroring the *Griselda* legend, she is extracted and taken to court to become the victim of the marital and sexual machinations of the King. The social isolation and associated moral purity of the rural retreat, which signifies both *Griselda* and Ophelia's chastity, has, I would like to suggest, a temporal frame. The pastoral virgin is socially abstracted but also temporally delayed. For *Griselda*, as for the young Ophelia imagined by Clarke and Faucit, the suspended innocence which is the chaste *delay* of pastoral life is replaced by the fast-paced cut and thrust of corruption at court.

Delay is associated with the chastity of other socially abstracted pastoral maids in the drama of the period, such as Fletcher's faithful shepherdess, Clorin. In the first scene of *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608-1609), Clorin enters 'having buried her love in an *Arbour*', leading to the reader's assumption that this love has recently died.<sup>7</sup> However, through the course of the play, it becomes apparent that Clorin's grief has been sustained over a long period of time. Florence Ada Kirk suggests that this reveals 'an inconsistency in the treatment of time in the play', however I argue this protracted delay works to define

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Dekker, Henry Chettle and William Haughton, *The pleasant comodie of Patient Grissill As it hath beene sundrie times lately plaid by the right honorable the Earle of Nottingham (Lord high Admirall) his seruants* (London, 1603), B3v. I will provide more detail on the legend of Patient *Griselda* and its transition on to the English stage in the sixteenth century in Chapter 2. For my consideration of the association of Ophelia with the virtue of patience and with *Griselda* as the exemplar of that virtue, I will be focusing on Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's play, *Patient Grissill*. *Griselda*'s name has many variants. I will use this modernised version throughout this chapter and in Chapter 2, except when quoting directly from a text. Similarly, I will use 'Marquess' to describe *Griselda*'s husband, whose name also varies across texts.

<sup>7</sup> John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, ed. by Cyrus Hoy, in *The dramatic works in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1.1.0.1.

Clorin's virtue as a chaste and patient maid and associates both virtues with the spatial isolation of the pastoral setting.<sup>8</sup> Patience and chastity, delay and isolation, all converge through the identity of the pastoral maid.

Thus, by considering Ophelia's chastity through the legend of Griselda and within a pastoral frame of reference, it is possible to posit a very specific reading of the scenes of her madness. Her distribution of flowers becomes symbolic of her desired return to rural simplicity; she wants to escape from the time bound mortality of the court and her role within it as sexual bait and return to the timeless immortality of a secluded pastoral and virginal existence. Thus female virtue both in the Patient Griselda narrative and in Clarke and Faucit's imagined biographies for Ophelia, is defined and preserved by both the virgin's physical abstraction, and as I have suggested, her temporal delay.

The girlhood both Clarke and Faucit create for Ophelia has obvious parallels with the narrative of Patient Griselda. Although I am not interested in imagining a biography for Ophelia, I do suggest that her association with the pastoral as both a temporally delayed and a socially abstracted patient virgin, which is seemingly completely imagined by Clarke and Faucit, is in fact traceable in the texts of *Hamlet*, and in the Folio text of the play in particular.<sup>9</sup> Ophelia is a silent presence during her first appearance in the second scene of the Folio text and I argue that her entrance is very lightly heralded by Horatio's closing speech in the preceding scene: 'But look, the morn in russet mantle clad | Walks o'er the dew on yon high eastern hill' (F, 1.1.147-8). With these few lines, Horatio moves the action from the dead of night to dawn and prepares the audience for the entrance of the court, and, I suggest, their first glimpse of Ophelia.

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<sup>8</sup> John Fletcher, *The faithful shepherdess*, ed. by Florence Ada Kirk (New York: Garland, 1980), p. L.

<sup>9</sup> All references to the Folio text of *Hamlet* are taken from William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The texts of 1603 and 1623*, The Arden Shakespeare Third Series, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006).

It is in particular the word 'russet' as it may be read in connection with Ophelia's entrance, that I am interested in here. In 1979, H. E. Kavros suggested that 'russet mantle' was a traditional epithet for the dawn and that through the use of this image Shakespeare was actually drawing on negative Homeric and biblical imaginings of doom laden daybreaks to suggest a sense of 'impending tragedy' in Elsinore.<sup>10</sup> Dover Wilson, however, in his edition of *Hamlet* of 1948, had already argued that the image of the morning 'in russet mantle clad' had more positive connotations. Russet, he claims, recalls 'the coarse homespun cloth, which is its original sense, and so gives birth to the image of Dawn as a labourer mounting the hill to his work of the day'.<sup>11</sup> For Dover Wilson, Russet is more than a reddish-brown colour: it is also type of material which suggests the simple country life of the peasantry.

In line with Dover Wilson, Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass have more recently suggested that russet 'defined both a class position and a sometimes patronizing approval of rustic simplicity'.<sup>12</sup> Russet represented a hard working, honest, rural underclass. Shakespeare's only other use of the word, in *Love's Labour's Lost* (c. 1595), further supports the notion of russet as a positive marker of simplistic integrity. At 5.2.412-3, Berowne pronounces that '[h]enceforth my wooing mind shall be expressed | In russet yeas and honest kersey noes'.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that, as Douglas Bruster argues in 1991, russet 'held very positive associations for some Elizabethans', suggesting 'hope and steadfastness' with a pastoral foundation.<sup>14</sup> Thus at the end of 1.1, we are presented with a

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<sup>10</sup> H. E. Kavros, 'The morn in russet mantle clad', *Notes and Queries*, 26.2 (1979), 119-20 (p. 120).

<sup>11</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, ed. by John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936; repr. 1964), p. xxxvi.

<sup>12</sup> Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance clothing and the materials of memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 230.

<sup>13</sup> William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. by Stanley Wells, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; repr. 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Douglas Bruster, 'Russet mantle', *Notes and Queries*, 38.1 (1991), 63-4 (pp. 63-4).

symbol of hope which conjures a return to an imagined idyll of pastoral simplicity and which dramatically contrasts with the pomp of the court as it enters for the first time at the beginning of the second scene of the play. Paradoxically, although the image of the russet dawn may well have been one of steadfast hope as inspired by rural innocence, its juxtaposition with the ritualised and complex machinations of the court could be disturbing for the audience of the play, perhaps even conjuring the sense of ‘impending tragedy’ Kavros has argued for.

Drawing on the work of Dover Wilson, Kavros, Bruster and Jones and Stallybrass, I would like to argue that the use of the term ‘russet mantle’ evokes a pastoral simplicity which audiences would have associated quite specifically with the character of Patient Griselda. Griselda is traditionally clad in a russet smock, of which she is stripped on her marriage to the Marquess; her simple peasant’s garb is replaced by the silks of the nobility. In Dekker, Chettle and Haughton’s play, the Marquess hangs Griselda’s smock on a peg on the stage as a constant reminder of her humble beginnings:

See woman heere hangs vp thine auncestrie,  
The monuments of thy nobillitie,  
This is thy russet gentrie, coate, and crest

(D2v)

On being banished from court, Griselda returns to her father in the country and her homecoming is confirmed when she is re-clothed in her russet smock. Jones and Stallybrass have argued that this garment is a ‘materialization both of social subordination and of resistance to the violent hierarchies of the livery system’ (Jones & Stallybrass, 244). I would like to suggest that Griselda’s russet gown is also a temporal marker of her gender as a delayed virgin prior to her marriage. Griselda’s country garb suggests her resilience as honest peasant and also as innocent virgin, despite her husband’s marital abuses. Russet therefore is a temporal marker of gender; it suggests a return to a golden age of innocence

which is embodied by the rural virgin, whose identity is dependent on the delay inherent in preserving female chastity.

By using the image of the russet clad morn, the text of *Hamlet*, I argue, quietly links the entrance of Ophelia with a latent pastoral image of delayed femininity: of patience and chastity. Thus we can read Ophelia's first entrance as a casting off of her own russet mantle. By coming to court and leaving her rural life, as Cowden Clarke and Faucit imagine it, Ophelia rejects the identity of the chaste maid, shrugging off the apparel of the *morning* in the same way that Hamlet casts off his 'nighted colour' of *mourning*, in order to act (1.2.68). However, the 'dawning' of Ophelia as suggested by her first entrance actually works, I suggest, to confirm her temporally gendered identity as passive and patient virgin rather than distancing her from it. In the nineteenth century Ellen Terry argued for an Ophelia dressed in brooding black rather than in the traditional white gown which in performance has frequently symbolised her virginity.<sup>15</sup> I would like to suggest, by contrast, that it is possible to envisage Ophelia 'in russet mantle clad'.

Other scenes in *Hamlet* provide opportunities to forge connections between the characters of Ophelia and Griselda. For example, scene two of *Patient Grissill*, in which Griselda and her father are presented discussing the danger posed by the amorous advances of the Marquess, provides many parallels with 1.3 of *Hamlet* in which Polonius and Laertes command Ophelia to disregard the prince's tenders of affection. In fact Janiculo, Griselda's father, and Polonius share many similarities in their devotion to preserving their daughters' chastity and ultimately their willingness to barter that chastity for favour at court.

Although Griselda is the early modern torch-bearer of authorised 'delayed' femininity, some scenes in *Hamlet* work to suggest Griselda's relative empowerment in

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<sup>15</sup> Elaine Showalter, 'Representing Ophelia: women, madness, and the responsibilities of feminist criticism', in *Shakespeare and the question of theory*, ed. by Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 77-94 (p. 89).



comparison to Ophelia's total objectification. For example, in 2.1, Ophelia describes Hamlet's ethereal visitation in her sewing closet. She is utterly passive, both in the encounter itself, and in her description of it to her father:

He took me by the wrist and held me hard,  
 Then goes he to the length of all his arm  
 And with his other hand thus o'er his brow  
 He falls to such perusal of my face  
 As 'a would draw it. Long stayed he so;  
 At last, a little shaking of mine arm  
 And thrice his head thus waving up and down,  
 He raised a sigh so piteous and profound  
 As it did seem to shatter all his bulk  
 And end his being. That done, he lets me go  
 And with his head over his shoulder turned  
 He seemed to find his way without his eyes  
 (For out o'doors he went without their helps)  
 And to the last bended their light on me.

(2.1.84-97)

Hamlet acts *on* Ophelia. She maintains her virtue as chaste, silent and obedient daughter in refusing to respond to his aggressive behaviour and in reporting the incident directly to her father. In *Patient Grissill*, we see this scene, or at least some version of it, not recounted but acted out. The Marquess has just banished Griselda and her twins from court:

*Turns from her*

*Marq.* Good Madame hence.  
*Gris.* Oh send one gracious smile  
 Before we leaue this place: turne not away,  
 Doe but looke backe, let vs but once more see  
 Those eyes, whose beames shall breath new soules in  
 three,  
 It is enough now weele depart in ioy

(G3r)

It can be argued that the text of *Hamlet* splits Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's scene of Griselda's banishment from court into two constituent scenes between Hamlet and Ophelia: their encounter in Ophelia's sewing closet with the over-the-shoulder stare and the 'nunnery' scene. In the scene quoted above, Griselda commands the Marquess' gaze.

Despite the fact that he is banishing her, she asks him to look back at her once he has turned

away, a request her words suggest is granted. Thus Griselda, despite her patience in the face of the most extreme abuses her husband can enforce, is in this way more autonomous than Ophelia and in this scene at least, acts to issue an order which the Marquess obeys. Griselda is a model for Ophelia's gendering through the delays of patience and chastity, but through Ophelia, *Hamlet* seems to make even more extreme the delays of passivity – of patience and chastity – which define her virtue.

The extremity of Ophelia's objectification paradoxically seems to suggest that she is no second Griselda, as does the fact that she challenges her brother's moral superiority in 1.3 and actually forces an apology from her father in 2.1. I suggest that by associating Ophelia with Griselda, *Hamlet* highlights the socially constructed nature of the identity of patient and passive delay which defines virtuous femininity. Through her interactions with Laertes and Polonius, the play suggests that Ophelia *is* capable of independent and virtuous action. In this way, she represents another intersection of the axes of time and gender; she exists as an example of virtuous female action and as such has the potential to challenge the patriarchal positioning of women as delayed and delaying. However, ultimately Ophelia's actions – culminating in her suicide – can only work to make her subjection as a delayed, patient and chaste maid at the court of Elsinore all the more tragic.

The delay which I suggest lies at the heart of patience and of chastity thus defines Ophelia's orthodox and patriarchally defined femininity. However, her delay is not always figured positively. Through her identity as patient and chaste virgin, in fact, Ophelia is branded as a delaying agent intent on the frustration of the men who act on her as passive object in the play. She thwarts Hamlet's attempts to woo her by returning his 'remembrances', and in doing so she delays his sexual gratification in a way in which the 'coquettish young woman of the court' of the Saxo Grammaticus and Belleforest source

material does not (3.1.92).<sup>16</sup> Her madness prevents her from being utilised as a political tool for succession: indefinitely delaying her usefulness to her father and the King. Her delay is her only virtue, yet that delay also defines her as an obstacle to be surmounted; she is figured as resistant and incomplete, in need of being 'concluded' by the legitimate sexual action which will perpetuate the patriarchal social order by producing male heirs. Thus through the character of Ophelia, another intersection of the axes of gender and time becomes apparent: women are not just created as authorised by the delays of patience and chastity, they are also figured as subversive through those same delays, which ultimately prevent male sexual and genealogical satisfaction. Ophelia is thus trapped in a double bind of delay which defines both her obedience and her subversive rebellion as a woman.

Whereas Ophelia is gendered by delay as both patient and chaste maid, Gertrude is gendered by her denial of delay as an unchaste, impatient and sexually active whore. She is an alternative site for the intersection of the axes of time and gender and the binaries of action / delay and male / female which structure them. As a sexually active woman, Gertrude denies the authorised delays of female chastity and patience in order to act out her 'naturally' subversive lasciviousness. As I suggested in my introduction, the unchaste woman is portrayed as temporally unbound in early modern conduct literature; like Eve, she is impatient and intemperate in her actions. Gertrude's sexual impropriety is, therefore, figured temporally in *Hamlet*. She describes her union with Claudius as 'our hasty marriage' and it is her 'most wicked speed' in marrying his uncle which Hamlet famously bemoans (2.2.57, 1.2.156). Her sexual immodesty is presented in temporal terms. Hamlet laments of Gertrude that 'a beast that wants discourse of reason | Would have mourned longer' (1.2.150-1). It is her refusal to observe the proper delay of ritualised grief and her willingness to remarry so quickly which her son finds difficult to accept. We see Hamlet

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<sup>16</sup> John Bligh, 'The women in the Hamlet story', *Dalhousie Review*, 53 (1973), 275-85 (p. 279).

struggling with his mother's rejection of modest delay in his contraction of the period of time between his father's death and her remarriage as he describes it. In 1.2, his father is 'two months dead', but shortly after, Hamlet describes his death as having taken place 'within a month [. . .] A little month' and at the staging of the Murder of Gonzago, he states 'my father died within's two hours!' (1.2.138, 145, 147, 3.2.120). Thus Gertrude's sexual impropriety in marrying her dead husband's brother is understood in temporal terms by her son.

Although Ophelia's delay is authorised and Gertrude's action is subversive, both women are presented as subversively delaying men. As I have suggested, Ophelia delays men by denying them sexual gratification, whereas Gertrude delays men by distracting them from their virtuous course with the promise of sexual fulfilment. As well as expressing a subversive challenge to patriarchy through her sexual action, Gertrude is figured as a delaying obstacle to male fulfilment in her capacity as sexual temptress. Her sexuality and willingness to act (her rejection of delay as a temporal frame for female virtue), is presented as actually delaying legitimate male action.

Steven Mullaney has observed that Hamlet's grief for his father's death 'is overlaid and supplanted by obsessive disgust over what has failed to die [that is,] Gertrude's sexual appetite'.<sup>17</sup> The denial of delay which is represented by Gertrude's second marriage prevents Hamlet from acting in the way he believes he should. As Mullaney suggests, '[m]ourning for a dead king, even revenge, is displaced or at least overlaid and complicated by misogyny toward a queen who is too vital, whose sexuality transgresses both her age and her brief tenure as widow' (Mullaney, 149). Hamlet is delayed by his mother's refusal to observe the ritualised delays of grief which he figures as subsumed by her sexual

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<sup>17</sup> Steven Mullaney, 'Mourning and Misogyny: *Hamlet*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600-1607', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45.2 (1994), 139-62 (p. 150).

appetite. By rejecting delay, Gertrude paradoxically forces Hamlet into a position of inaction and deferral. She is a 'female obstructor' of the classical and biblical moulds as described in the introduction to this thesis; her sexual action delays men on their journey to social fulfillment (Parker, *Literary*, 13). She delays both Hamlet and, as I have already described in the introduction to this chapter, Laertes, on their quests to revenge their fathers' murders. Her sexual action is positioned as a direct threat to male genealogical continuation, a threat which Hamlet feels not as a husband but as a son who will potentially be cut out of the line of succession as a result of his mother's sexual activity.<sup>18</sup> This threat forces Hamlet to beg Gertrude to '[r]efrain tonight' and 'go not to my uncle's bed'; he urges her to delay her sexual union with his uncle, a union which has already delayed Hamlet's own succession to the throne (3.4.163, 157).

As I have shown in this section, patience is one of the concepts through which the gendered and temporal axes of difference and the binaries of man / woman, action / delay which structure them, are negotiated in *Hamlet*. My consideration of Ophelia and Gertrude as temporally constructed women has revealed a variety of possible intersections between the axes of time and of gender. For example, as a patient maid, Ophelia represents authorised female delay and as an impatient and sexually active 'whore', Gertrude represents subversive female action. However, as I have also suggested, both the virgin and the whore are presented as subversively delaying men. All of these gendered temporal identities support the disempowerment of women which is fundamental to early modern patriarchal society. Nevertheless, as I have also argued, the fact that *Hamlet* makes a connection between Griselda and Ophelia can be read as a challenge to the reductive

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<sup>18</sup> R. S. White suggests Hamlet may even be anxious to prevent Gertrude from mothering an heir to the throne: 'Hamlet is particularly anxious to persuade Gertrude not to have sex with Claudius, and the motive may be more political than prurient or oedipal', a half brother would present a significant delay to Hamlet's succession. White does, however, acknowledge that as a result of her age, Gertrude's fertility is unlikely. R. S. White, 'Ophelia's Sisters', in *The impact of feminism in English Renaissance studies*, ed. by Dymphna Callaghan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 93-113 (p. 109).

temporalising of virtuous femininity as predicated solely on the inaction and passivity of delay.

I have suggested that because of the delay which is an inherent component of the concepts of patience and chastity, those virtues are presented as specifically female by a patriarchal society focused on perpetuating the subordination of women. In Chapter 2, I will explore the temporal gendering of patience in more detail and ask whether patience can in fact define authorised masculinity, or whether the patient man will always be feminised as a temporally gendered anomaly. Furthermore, I will consider whether patience can be employed to enable the kind of virtuous female *action* which, as I have suggested, *Hamlet's* Ophelia, on one level at least, presents as possible.

## ii      ‘[D]rinking, fencing, swearing’: the delays of prodigal action<sup>19</sup>

In this section of the chapter, I examine the figure of the prodigal son who I suggest, like the patient and chaste daughter, presents another site for the intersection of the axes of gender and of time in *Hamlet*. The prodigal son is figured as subversive through the action which defines his riotous living, however I argue that action also confirms the prodigal’s masculinity. I begin this section by outlining the two distinct ways in which prodigality enables young men in *Hamlet* to assert their masculinity through a denial of the strategies of delay which are, as I have suggested, presented as structuring femininity in this play. I explore how young men in *Hamlet* are presented as refusing to wait and as rapaciously consuming time. These temporal strategies of action suggest the prodigal’s subversive disregard for temporal propriety: he rejects the necessary and authorised delays of social maturation. I also suggest that, paradoxically, his rejection of responsibility delineates a period of subversive *delay* which risks feminising the prodigal. Ultimately, however, I suggest the prodigal is authorised through his repentance and his father’s forgiveness which validates his masculine identity and transforms the subversive delay of his riotous living into the authorised delay of necessary social maturation.

In *Hamlet*, we are presented with male characters who, like the prodigal son of the biblical parable, deny delay through their impetuous haste. This haste disrupts the socially delineated temporal progression from youth to adulthood, a progression which signifies successful and legitimate maturation. Claudius, for example, suggests his own prodigality in his refusal to wait for his brother’s natural demise. By murdering Hamlet senior, Claudius fractures the ‘natural’ progress of time and of genealogy by claiming his self-attributed ‘inheritance’ before it is due. Claudius’ intemperance – his prodigal refusal to

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<sup>19</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 2.1.25.

wait – is figured in the text through his constant use of words and phrases which denote his voracious consumption of time. In fact, he seems to have whipped the whole nation into a frenzy of activity, a ‘sweaty haste’ under which, as Marcellus and Horatio suggest, the country toils (1.1.76). In the first scene of the play we are told that the ‘post-haste and rummage’ which grips the land is necessary to defend Denmark against the aggression of Fortinbras (1.1.106). Claudius’ speech is littered with calls to immediate action which reflect this national crisis. He sends Cornelius and Voltemand to Norway with urgency: ‘Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty’ (1.2.39). Similarly, we are told at the beginning of 2.2 that with ‘hasty sending’ he has summoned Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to court (2.2.4). Once they have arrived at Elsinore and have been charged with locating Polonius’ body, Claudius again expresses the urgency of their task: ‘I pray you haste in this’ (4.1.37). Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are ultimately dispatched on a ‘speedy voyage’ with Hamlet, who Claudius has commanded shall ‘with speed to England’, sending with them other attendants with the words ‘[d]elay it not [. . .] Pray you make haste’ (3.3.24, 3.1.168, 4.3.53, 55). Thus the language Claudius uses aligns him with the rash temporality which defines the prodigal son.

The most obvious instance of Claudius’ prodigal disregard for delay is his failure to observe the necessary pause of mourning to mark his brother’s death before marrying with his former sister-in-law, a marriage which Horatio comments ‘followed hard upon’ Hamlet senior’s funeral (1.2.178). Claudius himself admits in his first lines that:

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother’s death  
 The memory be green, and it is us befitted  
 To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom  
 To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
 That we with wisest sorrow think on him  
 Together with remembrances of ourselves.

(1.2.1-7)



Claudius acknowledges the importance of remembrance at the same time as he disregards it. The royal 'we' has 'our sometime sister [. . .] Taken to wife', despite the prescribed period of mourning which is all too quickly, for Hamlet at least, forgotten (1.2.8, 14).

The prodigal's ability to disregard grief in his quest for sexual gratification, as illustrated by Claudius, is central to Heywood's *How a man may chuse a good wife from a bad* (c. 1601-2), a prodigal play which was contemporaneous with *Hamlet*. As I will explore in Chapter 3, the prescribed social delays of courtship, betrothal, marriage and solemnisation are commonly disregarded by prodigal sons who are eager to become prodigal husbands on the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean stage. Young Master Arthur's impatience to re-marry is therefore not unusual: 'I haue procur'd a licence, and this night' he proclaims to Mary, '[w]e will be married in a lawlesse Church'.<sup>20</sup> But by combining the prodigal's disregard for the delays of courtship with his disregard for the delay of mourning, *How a man may chuse* makes a connection with *Hamlet* and more specifically with Claudius which suggests his identity as a prodigal denier of delay. The object of Young Master Arthur's hasty affections is Mary, a courtesan for the love of whom he has, he believes, poisoned his former wife. On hearing the news of her impending marriage, Mary is relieved and somewhat taken back by Young Master Arthur's speed and efficiency:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <i>Mary</i>     | <i>These newes reuiue me, &amp; do somewhat ease<br/>The thought that was new gotten to my heart.<br/>But shall it be to night?</i>   |
| <i>Yong Ar.</i> | <i>I wench, to night.<br/>A sennet and odde dayes since my wife died<br/>Is past alreadie, and her timelesse death,<br/>Is but a nine daies talke, come go with me,<br/>And it shall be dispatched presently.</i> |

(H4r)

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<sup>20</sup> [Thomas Heywood], *A pleasant conceited comedie, wherein is shewed how a man may chuse a good wife from a bad As it hath bene sundry times acted by the Earle of Worcesters seruants* (London, 1602), H4r.

In the same way that Young Master Arthur disregards the socially acceptable period of mourning for a wife he has in fact poisoned, Claudius disregards a similar period of mourning for a brother he has likewise poisoned, in order to marry a wife whom he will ultimately *also* poison. Claudius' identity as a prodigal denier of delay, which I suggest is apparent in his negation of the ritualised and authorising delays of mourning and of marriage, is thus confirmed when considered in relation to other prodigal plays such as *How a man may chuse*.

Other characters in *Hamlet* are presented as refusing to wait. Prodigal action suggests subversive intemperance in the play; the prodigal poses a disruptive challenge to the temporal order of socially prescribed rituals of maturation. Descriptions of Fortinbras define him as prodigal in his quest to seize his inheritance back from Denmark. Horatio presents him in 1.1 as 'hot and full', implying his impetuosity and virility, and as being of 'unimproved mettle' suggesting the undisciplined or untried nature of his youthful exuberance (1.1.95). Claudius bemoans that Fortinbras continues 'to pester us', a turn of phrase which belittles the threat he poses by infantilising the Norwegian as a childish aggressor; he is a prodigal son who gets ahead of himself and who must be taught to observe the necessary delay of social maturation or face the condemnation of his elders (1.2.22). Like Fortinbras, Hamlet and Laertes are both presented as acting within a frame of prodigal rashness. Laertes' wish to travel to France is pitted against the 'duty' of his time in Denmark, implying his rejection of social ritual in favour of the liberties offered abroad (1.2.53). He is impetuous in his desire to leave his family and Denmark behind, proclaiming to Ophelia that he 'stay[s] too long' (1.3.51). Hamlet similarly makes gestures toward what we might call the prodigal impatience of the revenger, begging the ghost in 1.5 '[h]aste me to know't that I with wings as swift | As meditation or the thoughts of love | May sweep to my revenge' (1.5.29-31). The extent to which this desire to speed-up time –

to deny the delay of ritual propriety – is sustained by Hamlet is famously at issue in the field of *Hamlet* criticism, and is an issue I will return to in section three.<sup>21</sup> As I have suggested, although denying delay defines masculine authority in opposition to female deferral, prodigality in *Hamlet* also defines men as *subversively* active in their disregard for the delays of social propriety. The intersection of the axes of time and gender through the character of the prodigal creates masculine action as subversive rather than authorised, and the prodigal's denial of delay is played out, as I will now suggest, through the subversive actions of his riotous living.

It is the prodigal's subversive and intemperate action that is the focus of much prodigal literature. Prodigality in *Hamlet*, as in other early modern texts, is expressed in terms of hedonistic abandon and consumption. Catalogues of 'gaming [. . .] drinking, fencing, swearing, | Quarrelling, [and] drabbing', as listed by Reynaldo and Polonius, were a familiar component of almost all prodigal narratives of the early modern period, and particularly those of the Jacobean stage, as I shall illustrate in Chapter 3 (2.1.24-6). In *Hamlet*, as in other prodigal plays, this gross consumption is figured in specifically temporal terms. Laertes is sent on his prodigal adventures to France with encouragement from the King to '[t]ake thy fair hour, Laertes, time be thine' (1.2.62). Similarly, Polonius sends his son abroad with the phrase '[t]he time invests you', which in the Folio text is

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<sup>21</sup> The debate about delay in *Hamlet* continues to rage and there have been several contributions to the discussion in the last ten years. See for example: Eric P. Levy, 'The mimesis of time in *Hamlet*', *Philological Quarterly*, 86.4 (2007), 365-392; Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); James S. Bauman and Tita French Bauman, 'Chronos, Kairos, Aion: Failures of Decorum, Right-Timing, and Revenge in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*', in *Rhetoric and kairos: essays in history, theory, and praxis*, ed. by Phillip Sipiora and James S. Bauman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 165-86; Maurice Hunt, "'Forward Backward" Time and Apocalypse in *Hamlet*', *Kalamazoo*, 38.4 (2004/5), 379-400; Russell Samolsky, "'The Time Is Out of Joint": *Hamlet*, Messianism, and the Specter of Apocalypse', *English Language Notes*, 46.1 (2008), 29-46; Margreta de Grazia, 'Hamlet before Its Time', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 62.4 (2001), 355-75; Tzachi Zamir, 'Doing Nothing', *Mosaic*, 35.3 (2002), 167-82. Zamir suggest 'the very attempt to explain or supply excuses for delay is itself already endorsing of a tacit identification of subjectivity with agency. The same projection is also revealed in the interpreters *not* feeling the need to explain other aspects of the play, for example, Laertes' non-delayed resolution and action' (p. 171). This critical privileging of action over delay is, I suggest, suggestive of the association of masculinity with authorised action which I identify as taking place in early modern drama.

presented as '[t]he time invites you'; both variations suggesting Laertes' power to consume the time his prodigality makes available to him (1.3.82, F 1.3.83). Thus the prodigal's squandering of money is transformed into his expending of time in the play.

Men consume time so rapidly in *Hamlet* that confusion about the 'right time' is rife in the play. This is made apparent at the beginning of 1.4, when Hamlet's question 'What hour now?' results in the following debate between Horatio and Marcellus:

|                  |                            |           |
|------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Horatio</i>   | I think it lacks of twelve |           |
| <i>Marcellus</i> | No, it is struck.          |           |
| <i>Horatio</i>   | Indeed, I heard it not.    | (1.4.3-4) |

Questions about time, and more specifically the right time to act, are all important in this play, and, as I shall explore in more detail in Chapter 4, across the genre of revenge tragedy as a whole. I argue that these confused temporal moments suggest that the prodigal consumption of time leads to its distortion and instability. The prodigal's squandering of time has the effect of contracting and condensing time itself. As the prodigal devours every moment, he proportions time to suit his rapacious appetite; he transforms a regular temporal flow into irregular and unconnected, but more easily digestible, temporal units.

As I have illustrated, Hamlet expresses his disgust at Gertrude's remarriage through the contraction of time. He defines what he considers to be his mother's improper sexuality within a temporal frame. Considered in the context of the denial of delay and the propensity for rash action I have outlined, however, Hamlet's contraction of time – from two months to within two hours – becomes not only an expression of his mother's sexual impropriety, but also an expression of his own prodigality. Thus the prodigal son's denial of delay figured by his rapid consumption of time both risks feminising him by aligning his temporal impropriety with the sexual impropriety of the whore and yet at the same time asserts his specifically masculine authority in opposition to female strategies of delay. Thus

through the figure of the prodigal men are created as both subversive and authorised as a result of their action.

I suggest that the prodigal consumption and contraction of time as a denial of delay is portrayed through images of engorged corporeality in *Hamlet*. The Prince himself is ‘fat and scant of breath’ according to the Queen (5.2.269). Rather than lacking breath, the ‘puffed and reckless’ Laertes, as described by Ophelia, is fat *with* breath (1.3.48). In keeping with this image, Polonius, ushering his son to France, proclaims ‘[t]he wind sits in the shoulder of your sail’, and similarly Fortinbras is described by Hamlet as being ‘with divine ambition puffed’ (1.3.55, 4.4.48). Hamlet again reiterates this notion of distended and airy swollenness when he refers to Laertes’ ‘quick sail’ in 5.2 and he uses a similar image of air as consumable to describe his anticipation just before the *Murder of Gonzago* begins: ‘I | eat the air, promise-crammed’ (5.2.101, 3.2.89-90). Claudius is ‘the bloat King’, and the ‘fatness of these pury times’, as bemoaned by Hamlet, can lead only to death:

[. . .] We fat all  
creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots.  
Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable  
service, two dishes to one table. That’s the end.  
(3.4.180, 3.4.151, 4.3.21-4)

Hamlet’s conceit presents prodigal consumption and the temporal impropriety it implies as ultimately leading to destruction. In *Hamlet*, prodigal sons deny the delay of social ritual, and act to consume greedily the time they claim as their own. However that subversive denial of delay and consumption of time is ultimately recast as a subversive *delay* by the repentance which defines the discourse of prodigality itself. As Patricia Parker has argued, ‘being “puffed up” or inflated’ defines dilation and implies both a profuseness of action and a rejection of action – a delay – in early modern literature (Parker, ‘Dilation’, 526).

As I have suggested, prodigals in *Hamlet* assert their masculinity through temporal consumption. However, as I have also argued, prodigal sons are labelled subversive a result

of that same impatient action. Therefore the period of prodigality is also defined as a period of subversive *delay*: the prodigal son defers his maturation through the actions of his riotous living and by refusing to become a mature man through marriage, he risks being feminised like the virgin as a subversive agent of deferral. Consequently, prodigals pose a direct threat to patriarchy and to the stability of the gender categories which are defined in accordance with a specific opposition between authorised male action and subversive female delay which, as my consideration of conduct books and medical literature has shown, was a prevalent configuration of the axes of gender and of temporality. However, I suggest that the threat to patriarchy this feminisation of youth posits is invariably neutralised by the inevitable denouement of the prodigal narrative.

The prodigal son is defined not by his prodigality *per se* but by his repentance. The forgiving father reabsorbs the repentant son into the family he left behind. Thus the father's forgiveness neutralises prodigality as a natural and authorised process of social maturation, rather than as a denial of it. As I will go on to explore in more detail in Chapter 3, and as my analysis of *Hamlet* here suggests, prodigality becomes a socially acceptable form of male delay in early modern society; it is an authorised delay which defines masculine maturation. Therefore prodigality is no longer subversive, but exists to confirm the contained recklessness of youth which in turn legitimises the power of the older generation as represented by the forgiving father. I suggest that in *Hamlet*, enforcing prodigality as a necessary period of delay defined by its inevitable conclusion sustains patriarchy by empowering fathers over effeminised, delaying sons. I suggest young men are controlled by their fathers through their association with subversive delay in the same way that women are controlled by their husbands through that same association in early modern society.

The delay of prodigality is enforced on the younger characters by the older generation in *Hamlet*. In the play, prodigality is represented as a delay of maturation which

is necessary, accepted and even encouraged in its capacity to contain the rebellion of youth within an identity and timeframe controlled by the older generation. Perhaps most strikingly, Polonius pushes prodigality onto Laertes. He encourages his departure once he has received the King's permission to travel abroad, exclaiming, when he comes across him talking with Ophelia in 1.3, '[y]et here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard for shame!' (1.3.54). In the light of the prodigalising impulse of patriarchy I have outlined, Polonius' instruction to Reynaldo to spread rumours of his son's riotous living suggests a desire to police this youth not by preventing 'gaming [. . .] drinking, fencing, swearing, | Quarrelling [and] drabbing', but by *enforcing* those behaviours, behaviours which Polonius alone is empowered to forgive (2.1.24-6). By recognising the older generation's manipulation of prodigality, a new light is cast on both Claudius' and Polonius' encouragement of Laertes to consume time, as outlined earlier in the chapter. When they tell Laertes 'time be thine' and that '[t]he time invests you', they do not confirm their goodwill toward him as a liberated youth, but rather confirm the power they wield over him by enforcing an identity of prodigality which they define, prolong, and ultimately conclude (1.2.62, 1.3.82).

Whereas the delay of patience categorically prevents any form of female action, prodigality provides a structure of delay which allows men to act. The period of delay can also be a period of action because it is contained within a structure of forgiveness and repentance which will ultimately bring the prodigal son home, ending the delay of his riotous living. Thus, because the prodigal son will always and unquestioningly be forgiven, his 'delay' can be filled with the kind of sexual rebellion for which it is impossible to forgive women. For a woman to act prodigally would be to act sexually. Thus the legitimate delay represented by prodigality can only be male, because the sexual license implied by the prodigal's riotous living could never be authorised for early modern woman: the prodigal daughter cannot exist except as a whore.

As I have already suggested, Claudius belittles the threat posed by Fortinbras by presenting him as a prodigal son. However, whereas earlier in the chapter I argued that Claudius seemed to be positioning Fortinbras' prodigality in opposition to correct social maturation as a subversive denial of delay, it now seems that Claudius employs the strategy of enforcing and prolonging the prodigal behaviour of Fortinbras to *prevent* him from maturing, thus disabling the threat to Denmark he poses. Prodigality, rather than being an identity of subversive youth, is a way of circumventing the potential subversion of youth. By defining subversion as 'prodigal' it is contained as a delay which *will* come to an end, but only when the older generation are willing to offer their forgiveness. It is the prodigal's father who represents and asserts patriarchal authority and who, as I have shown and as I will explore in more detail in Chapter 3, employs strategies of delay to feminise his prodigal son and yet ultimately to strengthen patriarchal control of men over women and, more specifically, of old men over young, by authorising prodigal action as an expression of masculine maturation. The question of what happens when prodigality is extended into marriage – when the prodigal's repentance is itself delayed – is the focus of Chapter 3.



### iii '[S]wift' yet 'dull': the prodigality and patience of revenge<sup>22</sup>

In *Hamlet*, prodigality is perceived, on one level at least, as masculine in its refusal to wait and patience is presented as a specifically feminine inaction and acceptance of delay. In this section of the chapter, I argue that the character of the revenging son is both patient (waiting for the right opportunity to revenge or, in fact, waiting for God to mete out his vengeance) and prodigal (refusing to wait for God's judgement and seizing the moment to reap his *own* revenge). By waiting, Hamlet is authorised as patient within a Christian discourse which necessitates the acceptance of delay. However, that patience is presented as feminising the revenger. By acting, Hamlet is condemned as subversive in his rejection of God's command that '[v]engeance *is* mine', yet that action is also presented as confirming his masculine authority (Romans 12.19). Thus the temporal identity of the revenger destabilises the gendered binary opposition of authorised masculinity and subversive femininity on the early modern stage.

Throughout *Hamlet*, masculine identity is confirmed through the revenger's denial of delay. As revengers, Hamlet and Laertes both present themselves as acting in the moment and refusing to accept the passivity of patient endurance.<sup>23</sup> In the most quoted speech of the play, Hamlet denounces the 'law's delay' and rejects the 'patient merit of th'unworthy' in order to propose realising 'a consummation | Devoutly to be wished' (3.1.71, 73, 62-3). Life for Hamlet is a delay which the courageous should resolve to end directly. He bemoans that conscience makes men 'cowards' and his desire to attain the

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<sup>22</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.5.29, 4.4.32.

<sup>23</sup> Throughout the twentieth century, a number of critics who engage with the question of Hamlet's delay reject, like Hamlet himself, the idea that deferral is the central temporal premise of both Hamlet's character and the play as a whole. For example, see A. J. A. Waldock, *'Hamlet': A study in critical method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), p. 96. Waldock claims that '[t]he play is not dyed in delay'. Similarly, Bernard Grebanier suggests that 'the time element is of no consequence to the play', Bernard Grebanier, *The Heart of Hamlet: The Play Shakespeare Wrote* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell Company, 1960), p. 179. In 'A Note on the Time Scheme in *Hamlet*', *Notes and Queries*, 241 (1996), 159-60, Gene Fendt suggests that 'the geography explains the timing, which explains Hamlet's "melancholy"' (p. 160).

ultimate conclusion and end the ‘pause’ of life itself is prevented only by his own conscience, which makes him ‘lose the name of action’ (3.1.82, 67, 87).

Hamlet’s denial of delay is apparent throughout the play. As I have already suggested, Hamlet expresses a prodigal impatience in his request that the ghost reveal the identity of his murderer, so that he may with ‘wings as swift | As meditation or the thoughts of love’ enact his revenge (1.5.29-30). He confirms his aptness as a *son* in his expressed desire to act immediately and without pause, an aptness which pleases the ghost of his father.<sup>24</sup> Once he has formulated his plan to ‘catch the conscience of the King’, Hamlet wants to waste no time in achieving his strategy: ‘Bid the players make haste’, he commands Polonius; ‘[w]ill you two help to hasten them?’, he asks of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (2.2.540, 3.2.47-8). Hamlet confirms his masculinity through his action by presenting time, or more specifically, Fortune, as a woman. By sexualising time as the ‘strumpet’ Fortune, he suggests that it is a specifically *male* duty to possess and dominate time, to deny delay and to seize opportunity, represented as a fickle and inconstant female, by the forelock (2.2.231). Thus the male revenger’s action in the moment is placed in opposition to female strategies of delay.

Similarly, Laertes positions his active quest for revenge as confirmation of his masculine authority. As I illustrated in the introduction to the chapter, Laertes’ desire to act in the moment is presented in direct contrast with the female delays represented by Gertrude as whore and by the memory of his chaste mother. Calmness is not a valid attribute for Laertes’ identity as revenging son. Claudius, it seems, is well aware of the revenging son’s intemperance and propensity to reject delay and he uses the prodigal

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<sup>24</sup> Ronald Broude suggests that in the early modern period, ‘the son of a murdered man could not succeed to his inheritance until he had avenged his father’s death’. The son confirms his masculine identity as successor through revenge. Ronald Broude, ‘Time, Truth, and Right in *The Spanish Tragedy*’, *Studies in Philology*, 68.2 (1971), 130-145, p. 141.

impatience which defines revenge to his own advantage. I suggest Claudius' manipulation of Laertes works on a temporal level. He suggests to Laertes that '[t]ime qualifies the spark and fire' of filial obedience and love, and that in order to prove himself a man and a faithful son, he must reject 'abatements and delays' and seize the moment to, as he urges him 'show yourself in deed your father's son | More than in words' (4.7.111, 118, 123-4). Claudius suggests to the grief stricken Laertes that delay threatens to undermine his love for his father and as a result destabilises his authorised masculine identity as revenging son.

Claudius does more to ensure Laertes' impatience and his desire to wreak revenge against Hamlet by positioning himself as the agent of delay against which he must react. He allows Laertes to convince himself that he must kill Hamlet by pretending to have personal and political objections to revenge. In 4.7, Laertes accuses Claudius of delay, asking him why he has done nothing to bring Hamlet to justice when it is clear his actions are 'criminal and so capital in nature' (4.7.7). The King responds that he delays 'for two special reasons': Gertrude's love for Hamlet and the people's adoration of him as their prince (4.7.10). I suggest Claudius ensures Laertes is ready for revengeful action by providing him with a model of passive delay and deliberation against which he can react. He uses similar strategies of delay to manipulate his subjects. 'This sudden sending him away must seem | Deliberate pause', he tells the audience when contemplating his plot to have Hamlet killed in England (4.3.8-9). He suggests that Hamlet's banishment must seem to be a strategic delay; he presents it as a carefully thought out political ruse in order to secure Denmark's position in Europe. Thus Claudius manipulates time, and in particular delay, in order to both pacify his people and to spur Laertes on to the prodigally rash and subversively revengeful action which will guarantee Hamlet's demise.

As I have suggested, the denial of delay which is an inherent component of the revenging act (the revenger will not wait for God to mete out justice), also confirms the

masculinity of these revenging sons at the same time as it condemns them for prodigal impatience and religious disobedience. Hamlet and Laertes express an impatience which is presented as specifically masculine. However, the conclusive action which these sons strive to attain remains elusive throughout the play. When the ghost informs Hamlet that it was Claudius who murdered him, his amazed son proclaims 'O my prophetic soul!' (1.5.40). These words should signify an ending: the completion of a prophecy which has been realised in full (whether Hamlet prophesied the murder, or only Claudius' guilt of that murder, remains unclear). However, Hamlet's exclamation in fact signals the *beginning* of the delay which is as important a component of his revengeful quest as his desire to prodigally seize the moment and which, as I will now suggest, is also foundational to the identity of the revenging son.

Delay defines revenge as much as action does in *Hamlet* and that delay is presented as feminising the revenging son as ineffectual. As R. A. Foakes suggests, because he is 'irresolute, paralysed in will, unhealthy, morbid, neurotic, a dreamer', Hamlet appears as 'a very disturbing figure in the context of Western ideologies that value men of decision and action who are ready to do their duty'.<sup>25</sup> Both Hamlet's excessive mourning and his 'madness' feminise him as a passive agent of delay. This passivity, I suggest, links him

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<sup>25</sup> R. A. Foakes, 'Hamlet's Neglect of Revenge', in *'Hamlet': new critical essays*, ed. by Arthur F. Kinney (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 85-99 (p. 88). Other critics focus on Hamlet's psychological makeup in their analysis of his delay. Goethe was perhaps the first of these. He claimed Hamlet's delay was a result of his being 'devoid of that emotional strength that characterizes a hero'. See Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, ed. by Eric A. Blackall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989; repr. 1995), p. 146. Coleridge blamed Hamlet's delay on his 'great, almost enormous, intellectual activity', Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other Dramatists* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1908), p. 177. Freud inspired several investigations of Hamlet's delay which were structured by psychoanalysis. See Sigmund Freud, *The interpretation of dreams*, trans. by Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 204; and Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1949). Another group of critics reject the psychological explanations of delay in the play, suggesting instead that Hamlet's delay is the result, for example, of generic convention. See for example E. E. Stoll, 'Hamlet's Fault in the Light of Other Tragedies', in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'Hamlet': A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by David Bevington (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 104-5. Stoll claims simply that 'delay of some sort there is in all classical and Renaissance revenge tragedies' (p. 105). See also Edward Wagenknecht, 'The Perfect Revenge - Hamlet's Delay a Reconsideration', *College English*, 10.4 (1949), 188-95 (p. 189); and James L. Calderwood, *To Be and Not to Be: Negation and Metadrama in 'Hamlet'* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 27.

with the inactive and obedient virgin, Ophelia who is also an ineffective revenger. Hamlet's delay is presented, like Ophelia's, in terms of both his madness and his grief. Ophelia describes Hamlet's madness as being 'out of time'; the delay of his insanity works against the authorised actions which animate the 'courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword' (3.1.157, 150). Ophelia suggests that the intemperate delay of Hamlet's madness makes him less than a man. The connection between grief and madness is made in the figure of the melancholic youth. Hamlet is feminised by the excess of a cold humour which prevents him from taking action. As Marshal Grossman suggests, 'Hamlet's failure to turn grief into violence is unmanly', an accusation which Claudius levels at Hamlet in act one by suggesting that the ongoing delay of his mourning is an 'unmanly grief' (1.2.94).<sup>26</sup> Like the virgin Ophelia, Hamlet mourns too much and for too long, and his insanity is the result of that delay.

Gertrude feminises her son through her request that he be 'patient as the female dove' (5.1.275). Whereas Ophelia's patience defines her female virtue, Hamlet's patience defines him as subversive in his effeminate inaction. On the nineteenth century stage, Hamlet was often performed by a woman, a casting choice which worked to make the link between the delay of his revenge and the inaction of the female virgin explicit; Hamlet becomes the passive victim of a delicate feminine sensibility.<sup>27</sup> As well as other characters and theatre practitioners making a connection between Hamlet's madness, his excessive mourning, and the female delay which defines virginity, Hamlet makes that connection himself. His inability to seize opportunity and enact his revenge is apparent in the comparison he makes between himself and the player who is able to draw tears for Hecuba.

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<sup>26</sup> Marshall Grossman, 'Hamlet and the Genders of Grief', in *Grief and Gender: 700-1700*, ed. by Jennifer C. Vaught (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 177-93, (p. 184).

<sup>27</sup> On the casting of women in the role of Hamlet, see Tony Howard, *Women as Hamlet: performance and interpretation in theatre, film and fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

He tells the audience in soliloquy that he is 'unpregnant' of his cause, and that he 'can say nothing' (2.2.503-4). Like a virgin, Hamlet chooses delay over the fertility of action and of language which would enable him to achieve his vengeance. In that same speech, however, Hamlet also suggests that language itself delays the authorised male action of revenge. He compares himself to a whore:

Why, what an ass am I: this is most brave,  
That I, the son of a dear murdered,  
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words  
And fall a-cursing like a very drab.

(2.2.517-21)

Hamlet here associates his inaction with the verbosity of women as agents of delay, making a comparison between the proverbially opposed deeds of men and words of women. He is feminised both by his silence as a virgin, and by his loquaciousness as a whore; Hamlet embodies both polarities of female delay.

The delay of revenge also feminises Hamlet by aligning him with what was considered to be a specifically female form of temporally defined cruelty. Hamlet does not kill Claudius when he has the opportunity to in 3.3:

[. . .] And am I then revenged  
To take him in the purging of his soul  
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?  
No. [*Sheathes sword.*]  
Up sword, and know thou a more horrid hent  
When he is drunk, asleep or in his rage  
Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed,  
At game a-swearing, or about some act  
That has no relish of salvation in't.

(3.3.84-92)

This pause is an echo of that described by the first player in 2.2, who presents Pyrrhus halting in a similar manner over his enemy, Priam:

[. . .] For lo, his sword  
Which was declining on the milky head  
Of reverend Priam seemed i' th' air to stick.

So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood  
Like a neutral to his will and matter,  
Did nothing.  
But as we often see against some storm  
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,  
The bold winds speechless and the orb below  
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder  
Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrus' pause  
A roused vengeance sets him new a-work

(2.2.415-426)

These moments both seem to suggest that delay, instigated by the 'No' and the 'Did nothing' which abruptly interrupt the flow of the verse, work to more brutally mete out revenge in the long run. The 'dreadful thunder' which is the climax of *Hamlet* and of Hamlet's revenge is all the more powerful and his authority all the more absolute, because of the delay which it concludes. However, as I shall suggest in Chapter 4, the *delay* of revenge is figured as particularly feminine in its sadistically drawn-out cruelty and as a result Hamlet is figured feminine through this delay.

The revenging son in *Hamlet* is presented as simultaneously both patient and prodigal. He is, therefore, both active and delayed, masculine and feminine, authorised and subversive. As such he destabilises the temporal and gendered binaries which I have suggested structure patience and prodigality. He is both active in his masculine prodigality and yet is delayed as a result of his feminised Christian patience. However, as I have also explored, patience and prodigality are *themselves* fundamentally 'confused': female patience is both authorised and subversive through delay, whereas masculine prodigality is both subversive and authorised through action. Thus the revenging son is a manifestation of this multiplicity of temporally gendered positions. Through the figure of the revenger and through the actions and delays of patience and prodigality which formulate revenge in *Hamlet*, various challenges, some of which I will now explore, are posited against the simplistic opposition between female subversive delay and male authorised action which is,

as a result, exposed as only one of the possible alignments of the complex intersection of the axes of time and gender on the early modern stage.



#### iv      **Thrifty prodigality, wasteful patience: *Hamlet* beyond binaries**

I have suggested that the concepts of patience, prodigality and revenge work to present multiple configurations of the binary oppositions between action and delay, male and female in *Hamlet*. Hamlet is himself a temporal oxymoron, both ‘swift’ and ‘dull’, ‘pregnant’ in his delay, and ‘unpregnant’ in his action (1.5.29, 4.4.32, 2.2.206, 2.2.503). There seems to be a collapse of sexual and gendered difference in *Hamlet* which is embodied in the identity of the revenger and specifically in Hamlet as revenging son. Murder inspires both the inaction of grief and the action of revenge, and we see the characters in *Hamlet* wrestling between these two out of joint temporalities and between the genders those temporalities conventionally delineate. In the play, there are so many conflicted uses of gender to describe time and time to describe gender, that it seems impossible to make any claims for the way in which gender is consistently created through time. In this last section, I consider some of those conflicted manipulations of the axes of time and gender and suggest that they work to deconstruct the binaries of action / delay and of male / female.

As I have suggested, patience is gendered as female in *Hamlet*. The delay inherent in chastity is figured as the principle of female patience in early modern society and we see this temporalisation of the virtue represented through Ophelia. However, patience is not *just* a female virtue in this play. Men in *Hamlet* are also figured as patient. Gertrude bids her son be ‘as patient as the female dove’, asking him to ‘[s]prinkle cool patience’ on his anger (5.1.275, 3.4.120). Male characters in *Hamlet* are consistently associated with the delay which is foundational to patient suffering. As well as Hamlet himself, Claudius acts as a delaying agent by preventing Fortinbras from going to war, by dragging out Hamlet’s departure for England and by distracting Laertes from his quest to revenge his father.

Horatio delays Hamlet in his bid to follow the ghost. Polonius delays everyone he speaks to with his unfocused ramblings. As Robert Hapgood has suggested, *Hamlet* is a play of delayed dialogue, through which characters fail to express themselves with temperance. He argues that the 'dominant characters in their primary conflicts share a basic rhythm of arrested action'.<sup>28</sup> *Hamlet*, he argues, is littered with examples of delayed speech and delayed exits, 'sputtering, jerking, veering, backing, stalling', characters begin to part from the stage but pause to add afterthoughts (Hapgood, 145).

So, the gendering of patience as female is confused when we consider how the delay that lies at the heart of patience is also an inherent part of *male* identity in *Hamlet*. On a more fundamental level, the association of patience with inaction, suffering and making do, is challenged in *Hamlet*, a play in which thriftiness is presented not as a concomitant of patience and forbearance, but of erratic and intemperate action. Hamlet proclaims to Horatio in 1.2: 'Thrift, thrift, Horatio, the funeral baked meats | Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables' (1.2.179-8). The thrift Hamlet describes is not that of forbearance, but of a frenzied activity which ultimately suggests the unrestrained and intemperate lusts of his mother, rather than her patient virtue. Similarly, Hamlet's description of his mother's 'enseamed' bed suggests a thrift which is in fact a further display of her unseemly sexuality (3.4.90). As R. S. White has argued, an 'enseamed' bed could describe a bed made with a sheet which, for reasons of thrift, had been cut in half down its worn-out middle before having had its unworn outer edges sewn together (White, 108). Recycling sheets worn away by love making suggests Gertrude's thrift in recycling brothers and is suggestive not of her inaction, but of her sexual impropriety.<sup>29</sup> Thus in *Hamlet*, thriftiness, which we may

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Hapgood, "'Hamlet' Nearly Absurd: The Dramaturgy of Delay', *The Tulane Drama Review*, 9.4 (1965), 132-45 (p. 134).

<sup>29</sup> Although it is, of course, unlikely that the Queen of Denmark would need to resort to such thrift, the association, I think, is interesting enough to warrant consideration.

expect to be associated with female patience and forbearance, is in fact linked with female subversive action. In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I will illustrate how the evolving discourse of patience which, as *Hamlet* in some ways suggests, was increasingly constructed not around suffering but around self-improvement, confused the gendering of the virtue in the Jacobean period.

In the same way that the female gendering of patience is destabilised through *Hamlet*, the male gendering of prodigality is also confused through the play. The thriftiness of patience which we might expect to be associated with female inaction is, in *Hamlet*, described in terms of intemperate action. Similarly, as I indicated earlier in the chapter, the wastefulness of prodigality, which we might expect to be associated with intemperate male action, is described in the terms of a particularly feminised discourse of corporeal dilation; a failure to act, or come to a point. For example, the wastefulness of Hamlet's prodigality is figured by Claudius in 1.2 through his nephew's immoderate and 'unmanly grief' (1.2.94). Hamlet wastes time as a prodigal son not by acting intemperately, but by refusing to act intemperately – thus he is feminised through his dilatory tears. Whereas I have suggested that prodigality is defined by a particularly male drive for hasty consumption which results in 'fatness', that fatness in *Hamlet* is also associated with a particularly feminine failure to act: with a dullness which delays action. The ghost directly associates dullness with fatness when he suggests to Hamlet that

[. . .] duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed  
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf  
Woudst thou not stir in this

(1.5.32-4)

Hamlet's 'dull revenge' – his failure to act – echoes throughout the play and figures him not as active prodigal son, but as an inactive and feminised coward, who fails to avenge his father's death (4.4.32). Thus Hamlet's fatness simultaneously describes his masculine

prodigality which is driven by rapid consumption as I have previously suggested, and his feminisation as a dilatory agent who denies action and revels in delay.

*Hamlet* consistently challenges the male gendering of prodigality at the same time as it asserts it. The feminisation of prodigality is illustrated by two direct uses of the word ‘prodigal’ in the play. Both occur in 1.3 and both are directed not in reference to the abundance of prodigal figures I have suggested haunt *Hamlet*, but in relation to Ophelia. Laertes warns his sister that ‘[t]he charest maid is prodigal enough | If she unmask her beauty to the moon’ (1.3.35-6). By suggesting that the delay and inaction of virginity itself is only a step away from the denial of delay and action which defines prodigality, Laertes offers a direct challenge to its masculinisation. Later in the scene, Polonius tells Ophelia that ‘I do know | When the blood burns how prodigal the soul | Lends the tongue vows’ (1.3.114-6). Although Polonius could be describing Hamlet’s manipulation of his daughter, he could equally be warning Ophelia not to promise herself in response to Hamlet’s impassioned pleadings. His later urging for Ophelia to be ‘something scanter of your maiden presence’ suggests that it is her own rather than Hamlet’s improper action which he warns against (1.3.120).

As I have suggested, confusion about the ‘right time’ in the play indicates the prodigal’s greedy consumption of moments in time and his rejection of ritual duration in favour of opportunity. However, this temporal confusion also suggests a destabilisation of the concept of time itself on a more fundamental level. The fluid nature of temporal strategies in *Hamlet* enables characters to be defined simultaneously by their propensity to act and their propensity to delay. The ‘moderate haste’ which Horatio describes in 1.2 reflects this destabilisation of identity through temporal disorder. The ghost, he tells Hamlet, stayed for as long as ‘one with moderate haste might tell a hundred’ (1.2.236). This definition of a period of time as both average and urgent represents the oxymoronic nature

of temporal identity in *Hamlet* as a whole; characters simultaneously wait and refuse to wait, they act and delay action.

The destabilisation of gendered identities in *Hamlet* demands a new consideration of Hamlet's delay as procrastinating revenger. If prodigality is founded on delay in the same way that patience is, then rather than being a result of his feminine sensibility, Hamlet's delay becomes a result of his masculine prodigality. He does not deny his masculinity by delaying, he embraces a masculinity which is defined by inaction as much as it is defined by action. Reading his delay as feminine denies the richness of suggestions throughout the text which define prodigality itself as an identity of dilation and delay. Thus as revenger, Hamlet constructs a subject position which challenges the polarised identities of female delay and male action by combining them.

## Conclusion

My analysis of *Hamlet* has suggested that a specific binary configuration of the axes of time and gender – that between male authorised action and female subversive delay – dominates the temporal gendering of characters in this play. For example, the patient maid and the impatient whore are positioned as subversive by virtue of the fact that they both *delay* the actions which enable male sexual and social fulfilment. Similarly, prodigal and revengeful action is ultimately authorised in that it confirms masculine maturation and honour. In these examples, masculinity is associated with authorised action and femininity with subversive delay. There is a sense that this specific intersection of time and gender in *Hamlet*, and in the conduct and medical literature explored in my introduction, is the default temporal position of early modern patriarchal society. This binary opposition perpetuates the dominance of men by denying women the capacity for virtuous action. It is this default position which Patricia Parker has identified in her work on delay and dilation. However this opposition does not represent the variety of configurations of the temporal and gendered binaries which I have illustrated are actually in operation in *Hamlet*. The various temporally gendered identities I have examined suggest that women can be authorised in their delay and men can be subversive in their action in this play. In the analysis of patience, prodigality and revenge which follows, I examine in more detail this multiplicity of alignments and misalignments of the temporal and gendered axes in both the domestic comedies and revenge tragedies of the early modern stage.

## Chapter 2

### Virtuous delay: the long-suffering wife ‘armed with patience’<sup>1</sup>

Early modern drama presents a variety of opposing conceptualisations of patience. It is both ‘[p]rincely’ and ‘boorish’, ‘calm’ and ‘cunning’, ‘valiant’ and ‘dull’, ‘[s]aint-like’ and ‘mortall’, ‘[p]uritane’ and ‘excessive’.<sup>2</sup> It is a trait of the nobility but also the mark of a fool. It resists revenge yet is its financier; it is a refusal to be made mad at the same time as it drives men to madness. Consciously effected, yet ideally never forced, patience is passionless in expression, yet is inspired by the passion of faith. In this chapter, I suggest these multiple definitions of patience are employed by early modern playwrights in order to shape temporally the genders of the characters they create. I analyse patient figures on the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean stage as sites for the intersection of the axes of gender

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<sup>1</sup> William Jones, *A treatise of patience in tribulation first, preached before the Right Honourable the Countesse of Southampton in her great heauines for the death of her most worthy husband and sonne: afterward enlarged for the helpe of all that are any way afflicted crossed or troubled. By William Iones B. of D. and P. of Arraton in the Isle of Wight. Herevnto are ioyned the teares of the Isle of Wight, shed on the tombe of their most noble Captaine Henrie Earle of Southampton and the Lord Wriothesly his sonne* (London, 1625), B3v.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Princely patience’: Anonymous, *The tragedy of Alphonsus, Emperour of Germany as it hath been [v]ery often a[cte]d (with great appl[ause]) at the privat house in Black-Friers by His Maiesties servants / by George Chapman, Gent.* (London, 1654), C3v; ‘boorish patience’: John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, *The Tragedy of Sir John Van Olden Barnavelt*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, in *The dramatic works in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1.1.36. ‘calm patience’: Philip Massinger, *The Roman Actor*, *The Revels Plays*, ed. by Martin White (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 3.2.95; ‘cunning patience’: John Fletcher, *A Wife for a Month*, ed. by Robert Kean Turner, in *The dramatic works in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), VI, 4.5.79; ‘valiant patience’: John Fletcher, Nathan Field and Philip Massinger, *The Honest Man's Fortune*, ed. by Cyrus Hoy, in *The dramatic works in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), X, 4.1.172; ‘dull patience’: Anonymous, *The tragedy of Alphonsus*, D4r; ‘Saint-like patience’: John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, *The Spanish Curate*, ed. by Robert Kean Turner, in *The dramatic works in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), X, 3.3.138; ‘mortall patience’: Thomas Heywood, *The brazen age the first act containing, the death of the centaure Nessus, the second, the tragedy of Meleager: the third the tragedy of Iason and Medea. The fourth. Vulcans net the fifth. The labours and death of Hercules: written by Thomas Heywood* (London, 1613), E2r; ‘Puritane patience’: Thomas Heywood, *The second part of, If you know not me, you know no bodie With the building of the Royall Exchange: and the famous victorie of Queene Elizabeth, in the yeare 1588* (London, 1606), C3r; ‘excessive patience’: Thomas Middleton, *A Fair Quarrel*, ed. by Suzanne Gossett, in *Thomas Middleton: the collected works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.1.113.

and of time and the binary oppositions of action and delay, male and female, which structure them.

My analysis of patience in relation to *Hamlet* has suggested it was one of the specifically female virtues which enabled the ideological control of women as passive objects of active male exchange. Through my consideration of Ophelia's patience and Gertrude's impatience, I have outlined the ways in which time is used to define female sexual and social virtue and vice. The authorised identity of the patient, chaste maid is defined by delay, whereas the subversive identity of the impatient whore is dependent on action. As I have also suggested, however, both Ophelia and Gertrude are ultimately presented as subversively delaying men in *Hamlet*. The multiplicity of possible intersections between concepts of gender and concepts of time which are apparent in the play destabilises the binary oppositions between action and delay, male and female, authorised and subversive. In this chapter, I explore this complex gendering of patience as a temporal concept in more detail.

In section one I devote a significant portion of the chapter to an examination of the early modern concept of patience as it is defined by suffering, hope and obedience, for both Christian men and women as God's subjects. I also suggest that patience is specifically aligned with femininity through the legendary figure of Patient Griselda, considering Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's *Patient Grissill* in order to explore how patience, like chastity, is used to control and objectify women as virtuously delayed on the early modern stage. I consider how the identity of the patient *wife* offers the perfect dramatic opportunity to transform the sexually unobtainable virgin into the sexually obtainable, yet still temporally delayed, spouse. In section two, I go on to analyse how the virtue of female patience, which affords women with a powerful moral integrity, is actually figured as subversively challenging male authority, and in section three I examine parts one and two



of *The honest whore* by Dekker / Middleton and Dekker respectively, alongside *Patient Grissill* in order to trace a temporal connection between shrewishness and whorishness. I suggest that both are defined in opposition to the patient wife as impatiently denying the social propriety of virtuous delay. I also go on to explore how this action of subversive femininity is ultimately recast as delay; the shrew and the whore are figured as delaying male *social*, if not sexual, satisfaction.

In section four I consider how patience itself as a concept is fundamentally defined by a ‘dual temporality’: it is both a delay characterised by endurance and passivity and a framework for active self-improvement in post-Reformation society. Therefore I suggest that through patience, both men and women can actually be presented as active rather than passive on the early modern stage. Drawing on this association of patience with self-improvement, I end the chapter with a consideration of the temporally anomalous patient husband who, like Hamlet, the revenging son, is feminised by his association with delay but who also uses the delay of patience to assert a virtuous and active *masculine* identity by converting his shrewish wife. Alongside the patient husband, I examine the anomalous honest (or patient) whore, considering the narratives of revelation and conversion which run through early modern presentations of both patience as a virtue and of prodigality as a vice.

i      ‘In your patience possess ye your souls’: patience as authorised delay<sup>3</sup>

In this section of the chapter, I explore how patience as a Christian virtue is defined by delay – the delay of suffering and of hope – and how that delay in turn works to shape the virtuous femininity of patient wives as silent and obedient. Like the virgin, the patient wife is controlled by a delayed temporality. Within early modern patriarchal society, she is defined by her ability to wait for her husband’s command without complaint: by her silence, her meekness and her obedience. I suggest that through the virtue of patience, and particularly through the figure of Patient Griselda, early modern women are associated with and controlled by patriarchally imposed delay. The patient wife as delayed woman thus presents one specific intersection of the gendered and temporal axes and of the binaries of male / female, action / delay which structure them.

The etymology of ‘patient’ is similar to that of ‘passion’, both words stemming from the Latin *pati*, to suffer or endure, and the latter linked explicitly to Christ’s suffering on the cross.<sup>4</sup> A survey of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century lexicons confirms

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 21.19. This biblical verse is used in treatises, sermons and religious poems throughout the early modern period to express the importance of patience as the defining virtue of the good Christian journeying through life’s trials. For example:

- ‘By Patience we doe our soules possesse | And tread the path to our soules Paradice’, Nicholas Breton, *The soules immortall crowne consisting of seauen glorious graces* 1. Vertue. 2. Wisedome. 3. Loue. 4. Constancie. 5. Patience. 6. Humilitie. 7. Infinitenes. : devided into seaven dayes workes, and dedicated to the Kings most excellent Maiestie (London, 1605), G2r.

- ‘The creature groaneth together with vs for his second comming. The Spouse prayeth for his appearing in the flesh [. . .] All these must possesse their soules in patience, waiting for the time’, William Hull, *The third work of mercy. Or, The sinners entertainment of harbourlesse Christ Set forth in sixe sermons, whereof the 1. is, The patterne of patience. 2. The knocke of the spirit. 3. The bride-groomes voyce. 4. Mans heart Christs home. 5. The blessed inne-mate. 6. Mutuall loue-feasts betweene God and Man.* By W. Hull Doctor of Diuinity (London, 1612), Dv.

- ‘in patience they may possesse their soules’, Cornelius Burges, *A chaine of graces drawne out at length for reformation of manners. Or, A brieft treatise of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godlinesse, brotherly-kindnesse, charitie. So farre forth as they are vrged by the Apostle in 2 Pet. 1. verse 5,6,7.* By C. Burges P. of Watford (London, 1622), G10v.

- ‘And therefore our Sauour, who knoweth our sores better than our selves do, recommends to vs this care, Possesse your soules; and hee teaches how wee may doe it; by your patience’, William Cowper, ‘The Prayse of Patience’, in *The workes of Mr Willia[m] Cowper late Bishop of Galloway Now newly collected into one volume. Whereunto is added a comentary on the Reuelation neuer before published. Also an alphabetically table for the finding out the principall heads contained in euery booke*, (London, 1623), pp. 3P2r-3P5v (3P2r).

<sup>4</sup> OED Online, patient, *adj.* and *n.*, passion, *n.*

that Christian suffering was foundational to the way early modern writers presented the concept of patience. John Florio's Italian / English dictionary, *A worlde of wordes*, published in 1598, defines the Italian 'Patienza, Patientia' as 'patience, suffrance, endurance, forbearing, constancie in abiding euill, aptness to suffer or abide' (Florio, Y5v). Thomas Wilson's *A Christian dictionarie* of 1612 describes patience in more detail:

Patience, is that gift of God, which enableth the Christian soule to endure crosses, quietly, and with ready submission to the will of God, because it is his pleasure to haue it so, for our tryall, or chasticement; and for the manifestation of his owne power and goodnesse, to the praise of his glory; and finally, for a Testimony against those that do trouble and vex his children.<sup>5</sup>

The suffering which is implicit in patience, as these lexicons present it, is defined as a delay of human happiness which must be passively endured.

The virtue of Christian patience is dependent on suffering, and the hope of concluding that suffering creates patience as a delay which will come to an end; the Christian patience of both men and women will be rewarded with the second coming. Thus suffering and hope work together within a Christian teleological framework to define patience as a necessary delay. Job, the biblical patient man, who I will consider in more detail in section five, is rewarded for his patience by God, who at the end of a period of extreme suffering gives him 'twice as much as he had before' and so 'blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning' (Job 42.10, 12). This biblical exemplum thus presents suffering and the hope needed to endure it as necessary delays on the path to fulfilment. Early modern lexicons also make a connection between the suffering which is implicit in patience and the hope of reward which enables the patient Christian to endure. Wilson's *A Christian dictionarie* defines patience as a 'bearing long with such as do prouoke vs,

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Wilson, *A Christian dictionarie Opening the signification of the chiefe words dispersed generally through Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, tending to increase Christian knowledge. Whereunto is annexed, a perticular dictionary for the Reuelation of S. Iohn. For the Canticles or Song of Salomon. For the Epistle to the Hebrues. By Tho: Wilson minister of the Word, at Saint Georges in Canterbury* (London, 1612), p. Z7v-Z8r.

waiting till they amend', quoting from Matthew 18.29, '*Haue patience with me and I will pay thee all*' (Wilson, Z7v). He presents patience as '[h]ope, expectation, or waiting' and directs the reader to Romans 8.25, which states 'if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*' (Wilson, Z7v). The stress in this verse is on waiting with expectation and hope despite not knowing when reward will come. Patience allows Christians to sustain themselves through the perpetual delay which defines existence in preparation for the second coming. William Hull advises in *The patterne of patience*, printed in 1612, that '*His houre is not yet come*, yet be of good cheere, the *Interim* is but short' (Hull, Dv). Patience is the ability to wait without complaint for an ending which is never in sight yet which is promised. As Martin Luther preaches, the 'patience of Christians is perpetuall, that is to say, such a patience as seemeth to be infinite and without ende, for the ende thereof doth not appeare'.<sup>6</sup> In fact Wilson defines 'waiting' as '[a]biding with patience' (Wilson, 2L3r). As we are told in 1 Thessalonians, 'the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night', without warning (1 Thessalonians 5.2). The use of the term delay in early modern lexicons links it to these definitions of patience as a 'bearing long' with hope of an ending which is continually deferred (Wilson, Z7v). In Florio's *A worlde of wordes*, the Italian 'Abbada' is defined as 'leasurely, at a stay, with expectation, at a bay, in hope, in delay' (Florio, Ar). Thus through hope, patience is aligned with an interminable delay, but a delay nonetheless, because the suffering which defines it *will* inevitably be concluded by the promised end.

Throughout the drama of the period, we see patience consistently positioned by different dramatists as a positive response to extreme suffering, thus confirming a virtuous

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, *A commentarie vpon the fiftene Psalmes, called Psalmi graduum, that is, Psalmes of degrees faithfully copied out of the lectures of D. Martin Luther ; very frutefull and comfortable for all Christian afflicted consciences to reade ; translated out of Latine into Englishe by Henry Bull* (London, 1577), N4r. The importance of Christian suffering as a perpetual state which is managed by patience and framed by hope is apparent in many sermons of the period. See for example: Jones, *A treatise of patience in tribulation*; Burges, *A chaine of graces*; Cowper, 'The Prayse of Patience'; Luther, *A commentarie vpon the fiftene Psalmes*.

social identity. In part one of Heywood's *The fair maid of the west* (1597-1604), Bess is told to 'use patience, which conquers all despaire'.<sup>7</sup> In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge* (c. 1607-1608), patience is 'saint-like' and in Middleton's *The Phoenix* (1603-1604) 'sacred patience' is celebrated by Tangle, the converted patient man.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in Dekker's *If it be not good* (1611-1612), '[t]is good to try mens patience'.<sup>9</sup> Patience as a concept thus works to authorise the patriarchal oppression of humankind under God and, as I will now explore, women under men. I suggest the temporal hierarchy which positions humankind as delayed in their expectation of God's action is, through patience, translated into a gendered hierarchy which positions women as delayed in opposition to male authorised action, and I suggest this alignment of the axes of time and gender is manifest in the figure of Patient Griselda on the early modern stage. Shakespeare's Petruchio declares that Katherine '[f]or patience' will 'prove a second Grissel' once she has been transformed into the patient wife by the trials he administers.<sup>10</sup> Suffering is the necessary enabler of both the good Christian and the good wife's patience, who as I will now suggest, works to define her authorised virtue through delay within a patriarchal and teleologically ordered society.

Patient Griselda is one of the most commonly employed literary exemplars of patient endurance in the late medieval and early modern periods, and through her the necessity of the good Christian's patience as dictated by God becomes the necessity of the

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Heywood, *The fair maid of the west. Or, A girle worth gold. The first part. As it was lately acted before the King and Queen, with approved liking. By the Queens Majesties Comedians. Written by T.H.* (London, 1631), Fv.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Cupid's Revenge*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, in *The dramatic works in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), II, 4.4.45; Thomas Middleton, *The Phoenix*, ed. by Lawerance Danson and Ivo Kamps, in *Thomas Middleton: the collected works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 15.341.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Dekker, *If it be not good, the Diuel is in it A new play, as it hath bin lately acted, with great applause, by the Queenes Maiesties Seruants: at the Red Bull. Written by Thomas Dekker* (London, 1612), Fr.

<sup>10</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. by Stanley Wells, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; repr. 1999), 2.1.290.

good wife's patience as dictated by her husband. The legend of Griselda, as I will now explore, thus reveals the gendering of the delay of patience in early modern society. In this chapter, I am chiefly interested in Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's dramatisation of the Griselda legend, *Patient Grissill*, which was performed at the turn of the century and printed in quarto in 1603. I will also, however, consider John Phillip's dramatic interpretation of the story, *The commodye of pacient and meeke Grissill* (1558-1561), which was the first dramatisation of the Griselda narrative for professional actors in England, as well as quoting from popular representations of Griselda in ballads and chapbooks of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean era.<sup>11</sup> During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many versions of the story are produced in England and in English, but prior to this the Griselda narrative had passed through several incarnations in other languages across Europe. The origins of the story have been traced to folkloric narratives from Greece and Turkey, and to the Cupid and Psyche myths of the classical world.<sup>12</sup> The legend is often described as entering into European literature with Boccaccio's *Decameron* in the fourteenth-century, which presents Griselda's trials in the final story of the collection. Using Boccaccio as his source, Petrarch Latinised the narrative and Chaucer in

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<sup>11</sup> There are several versions of the Griselda story which have not been translated into English or have been lost and which as a result I won't be considering in this chapter. Griselda is first dramatised in French in 1395 as *Le Mystère de Griseldis*. *L'Estoire de Griseldis*, another French dramatisation which drew on two prose translations of Petrarch's version of the story, was published in Paris in 1550 and available in England from 1558 onwards. For more on these versions, see Pamela Alan Brown, *Better a shrew than a sheep: women, drama, and the culture of jest in early modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 184. See also Judith Bronfman, 'Griselda, Renaissance Woman', in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in print: counterbalancing the canon*, ed. by Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), pp. 211-223 (p. 212). The first dramatisation of the story written in England was Ralph Radcliffe's lost play, the Latin *De patientia Grisildidis* of 1559, which it has been hypothesised used Chaucer's *The Clerk's Tale* as its source. See Ann Thompson, *Shakespeare's Chaucer: a study in literary origins* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978), p. 18. The play was performed by the boys of the author's grammar school in Herefordshire.

'John Phillip' is spelt a variety of ways, including John Phillips. In the Malone Society edition which I am using in this chapter (there is no available edition of the quarto), Greg and McKerrow suggest that Phillip was the most usual form of the name. John Phillip, *The Play of Patient Grissell*, ed. by W. W. Greg and Ronald Brunlees McKerrow (S.I: Malone Society, 1909), vi. Greg and McKerrow use the signatures from the quarto throughout.

<sup>12</sup> See William Edwin Bettridge and Francis Lee Utley, 'New Light on the Origin of the Griselda Story', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 13.2 (1971), 153-208.

turn reworked the story in *The Clerk's Tale*, claiming it was 'Fraunceis Petrak, the laureat poete' who provided him with inspiration.<sup>13</sup> I will refer to these versions of the legend throughout the chapter, in order to provide some background to the development of social attitudes toward patience as a gendered and temporal identity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Although versions of the Griselda story differ in their narrative development, they all have as their foundation the peasant Griselda's impeccable patience, which enables her to withstand the cruel trials inflicted on her by her husband and lord, the Marquess. The precise nature of those trials varies, but common to all versions of the story is the abduction of Griselda's children, her banishment to her father's peasant cottage and her reinstatement at the Marquess' palace as a servant employed to prepare a new bride for his remarriage. A dramatic denouement orchestrated by the Marquess is also evident in all versions of the story, through which he reveals his second bride-to-be as Griselda's long-lost daughter, rewarding her patience by reinstating her as mother and wife.

Every Griselda suffers, and her patient suffering is used to define not only her Christian obedience but more specifically her female virtue as an obedient wife. The medieval folk tale variant, *The Patience of the Princess*, which Bettridge and Utley identify as forming the basis of the Griselda narrative, presents perhaps the most extreme version of Griselda's trials, making the extent to which her suffering is a form of sexual slavery clear (Bettridge and Utley, 169). The princess of the story is sold by her peasant father to the King in order to save her destitute family from abject poverty. Her value as a commodity is her patience, and once he has her in his possession, the King decides to test the patience for

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<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Clerk's Prologue and Tale*, in *The Canterbury tales*, ed. by Jill Mann (London: Penguin, 2005), l. 31. Chaucer may also have used French prose translations of Petrarch's version of the story (Brown, p. 183, n. 16).

which he has paid ‘many florins’ (Bettridge and Utley, 176).<sup>14</sup> He deposits the ‘princess’ in an abandoned castle in the middle of a forest, where he leaves her in total solitude for many years, returning for brief periods only to impregnate her and to take away the four children she bears him. The King eventually marries the peasant girl and reunites her with her children, thus rewarding her patience and supposedly making amends for her suffering by legitimising her virtuous femininity as mother, wife and queen.

In later versions of the Griselda narrative, this sexual slavery is remodelled through marriage as the testing of a wife’s obedience. However, extreme suffering remains central to all versions of the story, because in every appropriation of the Griselda legend, the patient wife must lose her children. Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer all present Griselda as refusing to let her husband see the grief she suffers as a result of what she believes to have been their murder. This quietly endured suffering, which enables Griselda to express her female virtue as a patient wife, is ultimately recognised and rewarded. For Boccaccio, she is celebrated as a ‘paragon of goodness’, Chaucer presents her as enjoying ‘[f]ul many a yeer in heigh prosperitee’ and Petrarch’s Griselda lives ‘in boundless peace and harmony’ with her husband and children into old age (Chaucer, l. 1128)<sup>15</sup> In John Phillip’s play, as in these fourteenth century versions of the tale, Griselda’s patience makes her deserving of ‘perpetuall prayse’ as a virtuous wife and mother (H3r). Similarly, Dekker, Chettle and Haughton’s Griselda is exalted as a paragon of female virtue. The Marquess exclaims that ‘[m]y *Grissill* liues, and in the booke of Fame, | All worldes [*sic*] in golde shall register her name’ (Lr).

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<sup>14</sup> Although nine versions of the tale exist, from both Greece and Turkey, Bettridge and Utley reproduce a particular version from Smyrna and it is from this version that I quote.

<sup>15</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. by Guido Waldman, ed. by Jonathan Usher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; repr. 1998), p. 677; Francesco Petrarch, *Letters of old age I-XVIII*, trans. by Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin and Reta A. Bernardo, 2 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), II, p. 667.



Griselda's legitimate identity as celebrated wife and mother is thus presented in these key versions of the legend as dependent on her patience, which is in turn dependent on her suffering; suffering enables her to express her total subjection to her husband by allowing her to patiently and ultimately silently, bear his trials. Bellafront, the whore converted to patient wife in part two of *The honest whore*, must similarly suffer to prove herself a reformed character. Griselda's social elevation is confirmed by the removal of her russet smock which, as I suggested in Chapter 1, the Marquess displays as a reminder of her peasant past. Bellafront is also stripped of her clothes by her husband, who hopes to pawn her dress in order to fund his gambling habit. This parallel between the two characters invites us to make connections between them. Whereas Bellafront must suffer to pay for her past sins, Griselda must suffer not because of her own sexual indiscretions – for she has committed none – but because of the original sin; Eve's fall condemns every woman to a life of suffering and subjection. Thus reading Bellafront and Griselda side-by-side suggests that the delay of suffering necessarily defines female virtue in a post-lapsarian world, a world in which women must be temporally punished – forced to accept identities of passive delay – as a result of Eve's impatient action.

Patience enables Christians to suffer with hope; despite not knowing *when* the promised end will come, they have faith that it will eventually be realised because the scriptures tell them so. Patient Griselda, on the other hand, endures the trials orchestrated by her husband without any idea that she *will* eventually be released. Her suffering, as she experiences it, is not a delay; rather it is the perpetual order of things and the constant state of her existence. She does not know that her suffering is a test for which she will eventually be rewarded. Thus in Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer's versions of the Griselda story, the patient wife does not express any hope that the suffering she endures will be concluded. However, sixteenth-century dramatic versions of the narrative, which it has been argued

draw primarily on Chaucer's *The Clerk's Tale* and Petrarch's Latinised version of Boccaccio, as well as French appropriations of the story, *do* present Griselda as being aware that her suffering is a test which will eventually come to an end.<sup>16</sup> In John Phillip's dramatic portrayal of the story, once Griselda's children have been taken from her and, she assumes, murdered, she tells the audience that 'God will reuenge this bloody fackt, in end I nothings feare' (E4r). Although Phillip's play is 'a late morality of the type wherein ethical abstractions mingle with human figures', it is also a 'protestant appropriation' of the Griselda narrative.<sup>17</sup> As such, Phillip positions Griselda at the mercy of God's Providence and her own elect or damned status, but as also persisting with hope. As Harry Keyishian suggests, 'the story rejects the frightening idea that evil might be real or authority malicious, or that one day the individual will have to take responsibility for his own life'.<sup>18</sup> Whether or not Phillip's Griselda sees God's vengeance being enacted in this life or the next is hard to tell, but the important thing to note is that she has hope for an eventual conclusion orchestrated by God, and that hope recasts her suffering as a delay which she has no choice but to passively endure.

Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's Griselda does not express faith in God's providence, but she does have faith that her husband's cruelty is manufactured to test her virtue and will, as a result, eventually come to an end. When Furio, the Marquess' servant, takes her children from her, she begs him to treat them kindly, '[f]or my soule tels me, that my honoured Lord, | Does but to trie poore *Grissils* constancie' (G2r-v). This Griselda,

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<sup>16</sup> For more on Chaucer as a source, see Anna Baldwin, 'From the *Clerk's Tale* to *The Winter's Tale*', in *Chaucer traditions: studies in honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. by Ruth Morse, Barry. A. Windeatt and Derek Brewer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; repr. 2006), pp. 199-212.

<sup>17</sup> Cyrus Hoy, *Introductions, notes, and commentaries to texts in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), I, p. 134; Felicity Dunworth, 'A 'bosom burnt up with desires': The Trials of Patient Griselda on the Elizabethan Stage', *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 21.3 (1998), 330-53 (p. 336).

<sup>18</sup> Harry Keyishian, 'Griselda on the Elizabethan Stage: The *Patient Grissil* of Chettle, Dekker, and Haughton', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 16.2 (1976), 253-61 (p. 261).

unlike those of Boccaccio, Petrarch, Chaucer and even Phillip, seems to be aware that her husband is testing her patience and that her suffering is a necessary delay on the path to her ultimate reward. The Christian subject, like this Griselda, waits for God to determine their fate on the indefinitely deferred Day of Judgement, as Griselda waits for her husband to reward her patience with his love. As her father tells the audience, '[g]reat men are Gods, and they haue power ore vs' (K4v). Thus Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's version of the Griselda narrative closely aligns the Christian experience of suffering with the wife's experience of suffering by suggesting that Griselda is, like all good Christians, assured that the trials she endures are a delay on the path to her ultimate reward.

By the second half of the sixteenth century the ubiquitous nature of the Griselda legend would probably have meant that a significant number of audience members would have known how the narrative traditionally ended.<sup>19</sup> This knowledge of Griselda's suffering *as* a delay on the path to her ultimate restoration as wife to the Marquess and mother of his heirs becomes, as I have suggested, part of Griselda's own consciousness in Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's dramatic presentation of her story. The audience expect both general dramatic resolution at the end of the 'two-hours' traffic' they have paid to witness, and more specifically they expect Griselda's reinstatement at the end of this particular play.<sup>20</sup> Griselda is thus an exemplar of Christian patience in that she reassures readers and audience members that the suffering experienced by early modern Christians is a delay which *will* be concluded.

The afflictions and tribulations that define delay are discussed by Protestant preachers in the Jacobean period as stemming from antithetical sources: God and the

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<sup>19</sup> There were at least three ballads and possibly a chapbook in circulation in the early 1560s (Hoy, I, 133).

<sup>20</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by John Jowett, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; repr. 1999), Prologue, l. 12.

Devil.<sup>21</sup> These opposing views on the source of humanity's suffering are explored in the Patient Griselda legend, which queries the origin of humankind's wretchedness through the character of the Marquess and his varying yet predominantly oblique motives for inflicting great suffering on his wife. The narrative forces us to ask whether the Marquess represents God or the Devil and therefore whether it can be right for Griselda to blindly obey a husband who on many levels resembles a tyrant. In Boccaccio's version of the story, the Marquess is a misogynist who administers Griselda's trials simply because he 'has no time for women' (Boccaccio, 668). Petrarch's Marquess is described as succumbing to a 'strange craving [. . .] to probe deeper into his dear wife's faithfulness' (Petrarch, II, 661). Chaucer suggests he inflicts his trials purely on the impulse of an idle whim, for no other reason than 'hir sadnesse for to knowe' (Chaucer, l. 452). In John Phillip's version of the narrative, however, the Marquess is absolved of all responsibility for Griselda's suffering, as he is presented as inflicting her trials only at the bidding of the vice character Politick Persuasion. Similarly, in the ballad of 1600, possibly written by Thomas Deloney, the Marquess is forced to test his wife by his subjects, who are unhappy with her lowly birth and refer to her as 'beggars brat', demanding that her children be disinherited.<sup>22</sup> In Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's play, the Marquess acknowledges he has no idea why he has a 'bosome burnt vp with desires, | To trie [his] *Grissils* patience' (Dv). Through these different presentations of the Marquess' motivations, I suggest the Griselda legend engages with the delay which lies at the heart of Christianity: God's perpetual deferral of the second coming and humankind's long-awaited release from the trials of existence. Challenging the husband's authority to administer his wife's suffering – his right to delay her happiness –

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<sup>21</sup> William Jones, for example, suggests 'God doth suffer tribulation to fall vpon vs', whereas William Cowper argues that '[t]hou knowest not in what place Satan hath laid his snare to intrap thee, or how suddenly the occasion may arise, which may driue thee to Impatience' (Jones, C3r, Cowper, 3P5r).

<sup>22</sup> [Thomas Deloney], *A most pleasant ballad of patient Grissell To the tune of the brides good morrow* (London, 1600).

by extension challenges God's authority and his ongoing delay of humankind's ultimate salvation.

Despite this questioning of the Marquess' moral authority, the denouement of the Griselda legend ultimately celebrates the reassertion of patriarchal and religious order. Dekker, Chettle and Haughton present a happy ending which justifies the Marquess' cruel trials and which positions the Griselda narrative as a valid example for contemporary husbands wishing to assert authority over their wives. The Marquess himself proclaims that:

I tride my Grissils patience when twas greene,  
Like a young [Osier], and I moulded it  
Like waxe to all impressions: married men  
That long to tame their wiues must curbe them in,  
Before they need a bridle, then they'll prooue  
All Grissils full of patience, full of loue

(Lv)

Thus the Griselda legend works to authorise the patriarchal abuse of women, presenting their suffering as the necessary enabler of their patience and therefore their authorised virtue within patriarchal society. The patient wife is controlled by the testing to which her husband subjects her, thus her authorised identity as virtuous woman – her gendered identity – is dependent on the delay which defines her suffering.

As well as linking women with the delay of patience through the wife's necessary suffering and her hope for eventual release as I have suggested, the literature of the early modern period makes a more direct connection between women and delay by associating patience with the specifically female virtues of chastity and silence. Cotgrave's French / English dictionary defines patience not only as the ability to endure suffering, but also as '*meekenesse, mildnesse, quietnesse, obedience*' (3N5r). Florio's Italian dictionary similarly defines 'Patienza, Patientia' as 'subiection and obedience', and these attributes of patience align it with chastity (Florio, Y5v). Personifications of patience from the early modern

period commonly represent a female figure, and the chastity and obedience so valued in the early modern woman is reflected in the silence and constancy of Patience herself. In 2.4 of *Twelfth Night*, Viola (as Cesario) describes a woman, her ‘sister’, pining for a concealed love, for which ‘[s]he sat like patience on a monument, | Smiling at grief.’<sup>23</sup> This union of patience and grief is one which runs through many of Shakespeare’s plays, as Samuel Chew in his work on the iconography of the early modern period has explored, and the delay of mourning is something I will return to in Chapter 4.<sup>24</sup> However it is the positioning of the personification of Patience on a monument which I am interested in here. Chew points us toward Capaccio’s emblem of Patience from his *Dell Trattato Del’Imprese*, published in Italy in 1592 (Chew, 120) [Appendix Figure 1]. Here Patience stands on a pedestal, which indicates, as does Shakespeare’s description of her on a monument, a constancy and stability which women in the period were considered to be naturally incapable of as a result of their inherent lasciviousness. An even earlier image of Patience sat on a pedestal can be found in Hans Sebald Beham’s engraving of 1540 [Appendix Figure 2]. English iconography followed Italian and German example, and by 1623, Patience for William Cowper, depicted on the title page of his collection of works containing ‘The Prayse of Patience’, is similarly seated on a sturdy looking square plinth [Appendix Figure 3].

As well as being positioned firmly on a pedestal, Capaccio’s Patience has a bandage covering her mouth. As the constancy and obedience of the ideal wife is figured through the stability of the monument on which Patience is depicted as standing, so the *silence* of the virtuous woman is literally transposed on to the personification of Patience in the art and

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<sup>23</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, ed. by Stanley Wells, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; repr. 1999), 2.4.114-5.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Chew, *The Pilgrimage of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 120-1.

literature of the early modern period. William Jones' *A treatise of patience in tribulation* defines patience as '[q]uietly abiding vnder', and suggests that 'patience in the Old Testament is termed silence' (Jones, Bv). Cowper's treatise figures Christ's patience in terms of silence; 'hee, like the Lambe, was dumb before the shearer', and the lamb, as a symbol of silent suffering, is depicted alongside Patience in both Cowper's title page and Beham's engraving (Cowper, 3P3v). Plays from the period also directly link silence to patience: during the storm Lear declares 'I will be the patterne of all patience. | I will say nothing', and Vasques in Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1615-1633) pleads with Soranzo to have 'patience and silence' as he observes the masque performed by Hippolita.<sup>25</sup> The connection between the silence of Patience and of the obedient wife is perhaps more directly alluded to in Robert Davenport's play, *A new tricke to cheat the Divell* (c. 1624-1639), in which a husband bids his spouse 'have patience, and be quiet'.<sup>26</sup>

The silence and stillness of early modern personifications of Patience, on monuments and pedestals, suggests an image of the chaste, silent and obedient wife as living statue, a conceit explored literally in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (c. 1610-1611). Leontes can only be reunited with Hermione once the threat of her sexuality has been completely neutralised: once she has been set in stone and made silent and compliant in a stable and enduring form. Hermione is a Patient Griselda figure who is unfairly tested by her husband's jealousy and forced to suffer the loss of her children. Although some of Griselda's experiences are displaced into Hermione's daughter (it is, after all, Perdita who is raised in poverty before being brought to court to marry a lord), her appearance at the end

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<sup>25</sup> William Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear: The Quarto Text*, ed. by Gary Taylor, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; repr. 1999), 9.37-8; John Ford, *'Tis pity she's a whore*, Revels Student Editions, ed. by Derek Roper (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 4.1.33.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Davenport, *A pleasant and witty comedy: called, A new tricke to cheat the Divell*. Written by R.D. Gent (London, 1639), Cv.

of the play as a statue confirms her as a personification of the virtue itself, in line with contemporaneous representations of Patience on a pedestal.

The delay of Griselda's patience is inextricably linked to her virtuous femininity and specifically to the delay of her chastity before marriage. Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's Griselda is painfully aware of her own precarious position as virgin maid. She begs her father to allow her to abstract herself from men's desiring eyes:

Father, me thinkes it doth not fit a maide,  
By sitting thus in view, to draw mens eyes  
To stare vpon her: might it please your age,  
I could be more content to worke within

(A3v)

She is totally devoted to her virtue as a virgin, placating her father's concerns about the Marquess' intentions by reassuring him that '[b]efore my soule looke black with speckled sinne | My hands shal make me pale deathes underling' (A4r-v). The Marquess himself refers to her simply as 'fair Maide' and 'the virgin' (B2r, B3r). The delay of her patience implicitly and directly implies the delay of her chastity.

I suggest the delays of Griselda's patience and chastity define her total obedience as maid and wife throughout all versions and at every stage of the narrative. When Griselda is told she is the object of the Marquess' affections, John Phillip has her prepare herself for his proposal by stating that with '[f]aith, Loue and obedience due, I yelde here unto thee' (D3r). When she has been taken as the Marquess' new bride, Chaucer has her swear 'that nevere willingly | In werk ne thoght I nil yow disobeye' (Chaucer, ll. 362-3). On being installed in the Marquess' castle, Boccaccio describes Griselda as 'so obedient and attentive to her husband that he considered himself the most satisfied, most contented of men' (Boccaccio, 671). Petrarch's Griselda remains committed to her obedience even as her second child is taken from her. She tells the husband whom she believes has murdered her first child and is about to do the same to her second that 'the moment I entered your house,



as I laid aside my clothes, I laid aside my wishes and feelings, and put on yours; therefore, in anything, whatever you want, I too want' (Petrarch, II, 663). In the chapbook version of the story from 1619, Griselda remains resolute in her obedience even when she is told that her husband is to take a new bride: 'because I am your wife, and have deuoted myselfe to obedience, I am resolved to delight in nothing but your pleasure'.<sup>27</sup> Dekker, Chettle and Haughton make the extremity of Griselda's patience painful to watch, as the Marquess forces her to dress his new 'bride' and present her to him:

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <i>Marq.</i> | <i>Grissil</i> place you this crowne upon her head,<br>Put these imbrodered slippers on her feete.<br>Tis well; deliuer me your wedding-ring;<br>Circle-her finger with it, now stand by,<br>Art thou content with all? |
| <i>Gris.</i> | Content with all.   |

(K3v)

Obedience for the chaste maid and patient wife means subjection, absolute passivity and the unquestioning acceptance of suffering, with or without hope for its conclusion. Chastity and patience thus delay the maid and the wife by preventing them from acting; as chaste daughters and patient wives, women's agency is perpetually delayed by their obedient virtue.

Taking the delayed passivity of female obedience even further, in part one of *The honest whore*, the chastity of Infelice, who in part two of the play becomes a patient wife tested by a prodigal husband, is not only presented as silent and still, but as dead: she is described by her father as '[f]rozen and dried vp'.<sup>28</sup> At the beginning of the play, the Duke

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<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, *The antient, true, and admirable history of patient Grisel a poore mans daughter in France: shewing, how maides, by her example, in their good behauiour may marrie rich husbands: and likewise, wiues by their patience and obedience may gaine much glorie. Written first in French. And therefore to French I speake and giue direction. For English dames will liue in no subiection. But now translated into English. Therefore say not so. For English maids and wiues surpass the French, in goodnesse of their liues* (London, 1619), Dr.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, *The honest whore with, the humours of the patient man, and the longing wife. Tho: Dekker* (London, 1604), A2v.

fakes his daughter's death in order to prevent the development of her burgeoning love affair with the young courtier, Hippolyto. Like Hero in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), she is the ideal woman in her unconscious state; her virginity is eternally preserved in supposed death and her sexuality is, as a result, no longer a threat to male genealogy. However, as I suggested in Chapter 1, the virgin's total social abstraction also frustrates male desire by delaying male sexual fulfilment, therefore the patient wife is preferable to the chaste virgin, although both inhabit the same temporal frame of delay. The living, breathing Griselda – compliant and obedient – is a possession to be preferred to the cold, unyielding corpse of virginity as represented by Infelice.

In *The honest whore* plays and *Patient Grissill*, the patient and chaste are immortal and enduring and the sexually transgressive are condemned to the impermanence of temporal flux and ultimately, their own destruction. In Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's play, Griselda describes herself as eternal in her virginal state: 'If to die free from shame be nere to die, | Then Ile be crownd with immortalitie' (A4r). On her return to court following her prolonged banishment, the Marquess exclaims that she appears as youthful as ever:

Why are not you then nipt? you stil seeme fresh  
As if aduersities colde Izie hand,  
Had neuer laide his fingers on your heart

(K4r)

In direct contrast, Lodovico describes Bellafront, the honest whore, following the passage of a similar period of time, by suggesting that: 'the beauty of her cheek hath (like the Moone) suffered strange Eclipses since I beheld it: but women are like Medlars (no sooner ripe but rotten)'.<sup>29</sup> The delay of virginity places the virgin outside of time, whereas the actions of sexual subversion condemn the whore to time's ravages.

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Dekker, *The second part of The honest whore with the humours of the patient man, the impatient wife: the honest whore, perswaded by strong arguments to turne curtizan againe: her braue refuting those arguments. And lastly, the comicall passages of an Italian bridewell, where the scaene ends. Written by Thomas Dekker* (London, 1630), A3v. Part two is not recorded in the Stationer's Register until 1608, and not

The virtue of patience is, I have suggested, a site for the intersection of the axes of gender and of time in early modern culture. Through patience, all Christians are associated with the passivity and inaction which is necessary within a teleological society structured by the perpetual deferral of the second coming. Thus both Christian men and women are linked, through patience, with authorised delay. However, as my consideration of early modern texts has shown, women in particular are associated with patience, which is presented as a specifically female virtue through its connections with chastity and silence as symbols of the wife's obedience and the husband's authority. The figure of the patient wife in early modern literature is thus an example of how the identities of female virtue in patriarchal society are temporally defined as delayed. Thus patience, although it advocates *authorised* female delay, ultimately supports male authority in early modern society by denying women an *active* identity of virtue.

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printed as a quarto until 1630, however it is broadly assumed that Dekker (most probably working alone) would have completed the play shortly after the apparent success of part one, 'either in the fall of 1604 or early in 1605' (Hoy, II, 68).

## ii      ‘Delay breeds danger’: the denigration of patience<sup>30</sup>

As I have already illustrated, patience is described as ‘boorish’, ‘cunning’ and ‘dull’ on the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean stage.<sup>31</sup> In part one of the *The honest whore*, Candido’s patience is described as ‘monstrous’ (B3v). For Othello it is ‘bloody’; he tells Iago ‘I will be found most cunning in my patience, | But – dost thou hear? – most bloody’.<sup>32</sup> In this section of the chapter, I suggest that attacks on patience of this kind were the result of a patriarchal anxiety created by the authorisation of patience as an ideal *female* virtue. As I suggested in Chapter 1, the authorised delay of the virgin is ultimately presented as subversive within patriarchal society because it frustrates the sexual satisfaction of active masculinity. Unlike the virgin, the patient wife *is* obtainable; as a wife she is both sexually and socially mastered by her husband. Rather than preventing male sexual satisfaction, her patience, as a gendered identity of authorised delay, makes her a legitimate conduit for it. However, the moral superiority which her authorised identity of delay affords her means the patient wife, like the virgin, still poses a threat to masculine authority. Therefore, as I suggest in this section, patience is denigrated in appropriations of the Griselda legend in the early modern period. The patient wife becomes representative of a subversive form of female delay, rather than an authorised one, in yet another manifestation of the multiple possible intersections of the axes of time and gender.

Griselda offers an extreme model of patience which is communicated as an anomaly rather than an achievable identity in many versions of her story in both the medieval and early modern periods. The anonymous author of the Patient Griselda chapbook mocks the narrative as a trivial lesson in ‘How Maides, by her example, in their good behaiour may

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<sup>30</sup> Tilley, *A Dictionary of The Proverbs in England*, p. 149

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>32</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, ed. by Stanley Wells, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; repr. 1999), 4.1.89-90.

marrie rich HUSBANDS; AND Likewise, Wiues by their patience and obedience may gaine much Glorie' (Ar). The virtue of patience is denigrated as a manipulative tool employed by women attempting to secure their economic advancement through marriage. This critique of patience can be traced to the fourteenth century versions of the narrative. Chaucer directly bids his readers *not* to emulate Griselda's behaviour:

O noble wives, ful of heigh prudence,  
Lat noon humilitee youre tonge naile!  
Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence  
To write of yow a storye of swich mervaille  
As of Grisildis, pacient and kinde,  
Lest Chichevache yow swelwe in her entraille!

(Chaucer, ll. 1183-88)

In Petrarch's Latinised paraphrasing of the narrative, on which Chaucer draws, we see a similar, if less direct, questioning of Griselda's willingness to suffer as unnatural. Petrarch stresses the threatening nature of the servant who is sent by the Marquess to take Griselda's baby from her: 'The man's reputation was suspect, his looks were suspect, the hour was suspect, and so were his words' (Petrarch, II, 622). This information leads the reader to respond with abhorrence when Griselda, who we are told 'did not shed a tear, nor utter a sigh', hands her child over to a man whom she believes will be its executioner (Petrarch, II, 662). In a very similar passage, Chaucer also stresses the sinister nature of the abductor's appearance: 'Suspect his face, suspect his word also, | Suspect the time in which he this bigan' (Chaucer, ll. 541-2). Thus in both versions of the story, we are led to question the appropriateness of Griselda's behaviour as a mother and to consider her patient acceptance of her child's abduction as unnatural and therefore subversive.

The consideration of Griselda's patience as extreme and, in fact, immoral in its denial of the maternal instinct, is traceable to *The Decameron*. On having abducted both her children under the pretence that they must die to please his subjects, the Marquess is left 'not a little astonished' at his wife's continuing obedience and devotion to him: 'indeed,

were it not that he had observed the affection she had lavished on her children while he had tolerated them, he would have assumed that her behaviour stemmed from indifference' (Boccaccio, 673). This questioning of her ability to love her children becomes, later in the story, an interrogation of her sanity itself. 'Gualtieri' ultimately defines his wife as having 'sublime' motives for her patience, however, this doesn't stop Boccaccio from hinting that such behaviour in any normal individual would indicate mental disturbance (Boccaccio, 673). In describing Griselda's ultimate humiliation during her participation in the preparations for the Marquess' second marriage, we are told that '[t]his latest turn of affairs made no difference, he saw, to her attitude – a fact which, as he very well knew, could not be ascribed to feeble-mindedness, for he recognized that she was no fool' (Boccaccio, 676). The assurance the reader gets of Griselda's sanity at this point is enough to suggest that such extreme patience in any other circumstance and by any other woman would in fact be considered a departure from sanity. Petrarch similarly makes it very clear that he considers Griselda's behaviour to be perverse in its extremity. He directly addresses the reader at the conclusion of his translation:

I decided to retell this story in another language not so much to encourage the married women of our day to imitate this wife's patience, which to me seems hardly imitable, as to encourage the readers to imitate at least this woman's constancy, so that what she maintained toward her husband they may maintain toward our God.  
(Petrarch, II, 668)

Griselda's patience is not simply admirable in these versions of the narrative; it is in fact presented as perverse.

Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's *Griselda* has a huge amount of criticism levelled against her by other characters in the play. The playwrights create a Welsh subplot for the *Griselda* legend, in which Gwenthian, the Marquess' cousin and the shrewish wife whom Sir Owen is eager to tame, is 'feard to be made fool as Grissill is' (Fv). Gwenthian calls

Griselda a ‘ninny pobbie foole’ who is, in her eyes, unaccountably submissive to an arbitrarily cruel husband (F2v). This critique of the heroine foreshadows a twenty-first century reader’s admonition of Griselda’s ‘testing’ as indefensible domestic abuse, and also echoes Boccaccio, Chaucer and Petrarch’s versions of the story, which, as I have suggested, established Griselda as an unnaturally submissive wife and the Marquess as sadistic husband. The Griselda myth for these earlier authors is ‘a tale of aberrant human behaviour’ rather than the model for an ideal marriage, and we see this denigration of patience manifest in the character of the shrewish wife in Dekker, Chettle and Haughton’s play (Keyishian, 253).

So, although patience is celebrated and praised through the Griselda legend and in conduct literature and theological treatises and sermons, those same versions of the legend also challenge and criticise patience as perverse in its extremity. Pamela Allen Brown explores what she calls the tradition of ‘counter-Griseldas’, instances in Griselda’s presentation ‘when she is derided through proverbial argumentation, when her didactic value is mocked, and when her value as an exemplar of the new nuclear household is questioned’ (Brown, 182). In these positionings of Griselda not as a model for virtuous wives but as an ‘irritant to both men and women’, Brown reads a challenge to the attempt to define virtuous femininity as *naturally* passive and malleable (Brown, 204). She suggests that ‘[f]rom a householder’s point of view, the demands of running a household meant that wifely cleverness, initiative, and outspokenness were to be preferred to passivity despite all sermons to the contrary’ (Brown, 205). Thus Brown sees that Griselda was used to challenge the model of virtuous femininity as passive and delayed as it was presented in conduct manuals and in religious treatises and sermons. However, I suggest this challenge to the legitimate identity of the patient wife also works to disempower her moral authority.

Criticisms of both patience and virginity appear to posit attacks on the patriarchal definition of women as passive and subject to male rule. However, I argue that by denigrating patience and virginity, early modern texts actually work to discredit the moral superiority by which chaste maids and patient wives are actually empowered. Challenges made against women leading lives of religious seclusion can be positioned as liberating those women from the binds of social abstraction, but they can also work to disempower women by devaluing the authority and independence they command as life-choice virgins.<sup>33</sup> Virginity is a delay which must be brought to an end with male sexual satisfaction – with marriage – otherwise it poses a threat by venerating female strategies of deferral and therefore necessitating the frustration of male desire indefinitely.

This denigration of virginity is apparent in both *Patient Grissill* and in *The honest whore* plays. Julia, the Marquess' sister in Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's play, rails against marriage, stating that 'to be married is to lue in a kinde of hell' and that 'those that goe to wooe, goe to woe' (C4v, J2v). Her perpetual virginity frustrates her male suitors Onophrio, Farneze and Urcenze, delaying them on their quest for sexual and marital fulfilment. They proclaim that she will 'leade Apes in hell'; she is damned as a spinster because of her refusal to yield her virginity to any husband (L2r). Similarly, Infelice, the chaste virgin of part one of *The honest whore*, delays the satisfaction of her suitor, Hippolyto, by seeming to die. He swears that he will not look on another woman, 'I will be true, | Even to her dust and ashes', he proclaims, and although his friend Matheo tempts him with the whore Bellafront, he resists (A4r). Infelice's extreme virginity – her death – prevents him taking sexual action. Thus virginity in these plays is cast as a delay which

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<sup>33</sup> For more on the subversive resistance of virgins, see Theodora A. Jankowski, *Pure resistance: queer virginity in early modern English drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).



itself frustrates the male quest for sexual and social fulfilment and which must, as a result, be concluded by marriage.

The denigration of patience creates women as subversive rather than authorised in their patient delay. I have suggested that patience takes over where virginity leaves off as an identity of passive, female delay *within* marriage. Like virginity, patience also becomes a threat to male authority, not because it delays male sexual action, but because it is an identity which *authorises* female delay and which therefore challenges the binary opposition of authorised male action and subversive female delay which, as I have suggested, was frequently employed by patriarchal society to ensure the continuation of male authority. The inaction which defines the patient wife's virtue is thus also used to define her subversion: Griselda's passivity as a mother when faced with the abduction of her children is presented in these texts as extreme and unnatural. Thus the patient wife is associated with delay in negative ways on the early modern stage, creating her as subversive rather than morally empowered as a result of her patience.

### iii      ‘Women must have their longings, or they die’: whores and shrews<sup>34</sup>

Linda Woodbridge asserts that the polarities of biblical femininity as embodied by Eve and the Virgin Mary were translated into a secular literary opposition of female character types, specifically an opposition between ‘the Patient Griselda figure and the aggressive, liberty-minded woman, either a shrew or a whore’ in early modern theatre and culture (Woodbridge, 211). I have suggested that this binary opposition of female virtue and vice has a temporal dimension: virtuous women are presented as patiently delayed, lascivious women are presented as impatiently active, as my analysis of Ophelia and Gertrude in Chapter 1 has suggested. Through the identities of the shrew and the whore, the subversive woman is temporally defined as active in her denial of the delays of patience and chastity. In this section of the chapter, I examine both Dekker, Chettle and Haughton’s *Patient Grissill* and Dekker and Middleton’s *The honest whore* plays in order to demonstrate the ways in which the shrew and the whore are presented in temporal terms in opposition to the patient wife.

In his treatise on patience, William Cowper defines impatience as ‘the receptacle and right lodging place of all sinnes’ and suggests ‘evill is but the impatience of good’ (Cowper, 3P3v). He also links impatience with sexual subversion, asking ‘who would commit adultery, if hee were patient of Chastity?’ (3P3v). This sensual impatience is, I suggest, used to define the moral deprivation of the early modern whore and shrew in temporal terms. In the same way that patience is aligned with the female virtues of chastity, obedience and silence, impatience is aligned with female vice. Impatience defines both the sexual impropriety of the whore and the meddling and scolding which is a manifestation of the social impropriety of the shrew. As I have suggested in the introduction to this thesis,

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<sup>34</sup> Dekker and Middleton, part one of *The honest whore*, B2r.

because it was believed women were delayed in their development, they were presented as naturally inclined to improper and impatient action. Women are defined as temporally subversive because, paradoxically, a symptom of their delayed development is their intemperance and impatience.

The subplot of *Patient Grissill* is dominated by Gwenthian, the Welsh shrew who, as I have already suggested, fears being made into a second Griselda. Gwenthian denies the delay of patience which defines virtuous femininity, rejecting the passive identity of the patient wife to take an active role within her marriage. Julia describes Gwenthian as refusing to passively accept her husband's authority, claiming that 'if she scolde heele fight, and if he quarrell sheele take vp the bucklers' (C4v). Gwenthian is thus presented as matching her husband's actions with her own. When Sir Owen tears a rebato she has ordered, she in turn tears his bonds. She is sarcastically described by the Marquess and Julia's suitors as 'vertuous', 'wondrous beautifull', 'wondrous kinde', and 'the quietest' and 'patientest' woman in the world (Fv). By mocking Gwenthian in this way, these men link her impatience with her lack of female virtue. Furthermore, by denying the delay of patience, Gwenthian is also portrayed as denying the delay of chastity. When, in disguise as a peasant, she invites a horde of beggars into their home in order to ruin a feast Sir Owen has planned for the Marquess, she tells one of her guests, in her broken English, that 'Sir *Owen* has anger her Lady, and therfore her Lady is anger Sir *Owen*' (H4r). One of the beggars, rather too keen to assist Gwenthian in her plot to anger her husband, suggests that she should: 'Make him a cuckolde madam' (H4r). Therefore her attempts to place herself on an equal footing with her husband by retaliating against his abuses cast her as sexually subversive; this beggar at least considers that her only recourse to revenge is sexual betrayal. For a woman to take action and assert equality with her husband, the play seems to suggest, is to brand herself a whore. In fact the connection between Gwenthian's

impatient action and her lasciviousness is made clear later in the scene, when the beggar refers to her directly as 'whore' as he leaves (H4r).

Throughout the play, Gwenthian's attempts to test her husband's patience connect her with her cousin the Marquess. She herself asserts that 'her cozen has tried *Grissill*, so *Gwenthian* has Sir *Owen*' (L2r). However, whereas the Marquess is confirmed as virtuous husband and father at the end of the play, Gwenthian has to undergo a conversion in order to be accepted as virtuous wife, as the impatient actions which drive her to test her husband define her as a socially subversive shrew. Despite being characterised throughout the play as wilful and disobedient, in act five Gwenthian suddenly seems to embrace the identity of passive subjection which was a central tenet of the marital conduct literature of the period, proclaiming that 'sir Owen shal be her head' (L2r). Both the Marquess and Gwenthian test their spouses, but it is only Gwenthian, as a woman, who is defined as subversively impatient as a result and who must necessarily undergo conversion.

In part one of *The honest whore*, Viola, the 'waspysh shrowe' and wife of Candido the Patient Man, is similarly linked to the Marquess of the Griselda legend in her desire to test her husband's proclaimed patience (C2r). Petrarch's Marquess has, as I have already suggested, a 'strange craving' to test his wife, and in *Patient Grissill*, he is described as having a 'bosome burnt vp with desires, | To trie my Grissils patience' (Petrarch, II, 661, *Patient Grissill*, Dv). Viola describes a similar 'tickling within mee – such a strange longing; nay, verily I doo long-' (Br). Her brother interjects at this point to suggest she might be pregnant, however Viola eventually discloses the nature of her craving: she wishes to break her husband's patience. Her brother, like Gwenthian's beggar, immediately suggests she should 'make him a cuckold', again linking female action with sexual impropriety (Br). Viola runs the risk of labelling herself a whore by acting to test her husband and by denying the delay of patience which should structure her identity as chaste

spouse. On the title page of the quarto edition of the play, Viola is named the ‘longing wife’, and accordingly she tells her brother that ‘[w]omen must have their longings, or they die’ (B2r). Her impulse to test her husband is presented as a physical yearning, an almost sexual desire; it is an unchaste impatience which creates her as a subversive figure on the Jacobean stage.

Viola orchestrates a series of tests for Candido which culminate with his incarceration in Bedlam. Like Gwenthian, she also undergoes an apparently unprompted last minute conversion. Viola’s virtue and her secure position as wife, are dependent on her denial of the impatient actions which defined her as a shrew and which drove her to test her husband’s patience. Candido’s second wife, who remains unnamed in part two of *The honest whore* but who is identified on the title page of the quarto as ‘the Impatient Wife’, is similarly defined as intemperate in her subversive actions: she strikes one of the household’s apprentices when he fails to fill her glass with wine quickly enough. This second wife, however, orchestrates no trials to test the virtue of her patient husband; instead Candido works to ‘tame’ her, ultimately with success. She is also converted, kneeling to him to proclaim ‘I disdaine | The wife that is the husbands Sovereigne’ (D4r).

The chapbook version of the Griselda story published in 1619 similarly condemns those women who want to take an active part in their husband’s business, impatient wives who

are so peremptory, that I [the author] haue seene them enter into the roome of privacy, where secret businesses of strangers haue been imparted, and were to be discussed; nor hath this been done with a louely insinuation, or cunning excuse of longing, or willingnes to be instructed, or other pretty inducements to permission, but with a high commanding voice, and impudent assurances of their owne worth

(Anon, C4v)

The author suggests women are naturally disobedient and shrewish, leading to their

obscurity and wickednes; in which (say what women can) if there be not a moderation, by nature, there must bee an inforcement by iudgement: and that woman that will not be ruled by good counsell, must be overruled by better example. Of which, this now in hand (of lady Griseld) is a mirror, and transparent Crystall to manifest true vertue, and wifely duty indeed, and so I come to the wonder of her obedience.

(Anon, C5r)

Breaking out of the narrative frame at several points to address the reader directly and at length on the impropriety of froward and impatient wives, the chapbook positions the story of Griselda as a tool to be used by husbands wishing to convert their wives to correspond with the 'patient' ideal. The impatient wife for this anonymous author is impudent, commanding, obscene and wicked; her actions bring her morality into question.

By bearing all their trials with unfaltering patience – by not acting – Sir Owen and Candido succeed in converting their shrews into patient wives. Sir Owen suggests that Griselda similarly 'pridled' the Marquess with her patience (F3v). However, the comparison is tenuous: as I have suggested, the Marquess, unlike Gwenthian, Viola, and Candido's second wife, does not have to undergo any kind of conversion in order to be accepted as a worthy spouse. As a man, he is authorised in his choice of action, whereas the same action undertaken by wives is labelled impatient and unchaste; the shrewish identity is one from which they must be converted in order to be valued in a patriarchal society.

In early modern drama, whores, like shrews, are temporally defined by their impatience. Bellafront, the eponymous honest whore, is depicted, before her conversion, denying the delays of female propriety: chastity and patience. In part one, Bellafront is established as a woman of uncontrolled temporal rapacity. In the conversion scene at the heart of the play, Hippolyto accuses her of consuming time with impatience, filling her hours with sin to avoid the moral condemnation of self-reflection:

Your daies are tedious, your houres burdensome:  
 And wer't not for full suppers, midnight Reuels,  
 Dauncing, wine, ryotous meetings, which doe drowne,  
 And bury quite in you all vertuous thoughts,  
 And on your eye-lids hang so heauily,  
 They haue no power to looke so high as heauen,  
 Youde sit and muse on nothing but despayre

(Er-v)

Bellafront is presented consuming physical and material objects in the same way she consumes time. To illustrate this, she is surrounded by the material trappings of her whoredom:

*Enter Roger with a stoole, cushin, looking-glasse and chasing-dish, Those being set downe, he pulls out of his pocket, a violl with white cullor in it. And 2. boxes, one with white, another red painting, he places all things in order & a candle by the~ singing with the ends of old Ballads as he does it. At last Bellafront (as he rubs his cheeke with the cullors, whistles within. [sic]*

(C3v)

Whereas Griselda's patience allows her to endure as chaste and immortal wife, Bellafront's promiscuity condemns her to intemperate and impatient consumption and consummation which will lead directly to her own destruction. As I have suggested, Griselda's beauty is preserved during her banishment from court; she is described as immortal and unchanging as a result of her patience and chastity. In contrast, Bellafront is depicted by Lodovico in part two of *The honest whore*, following the passage of a similar period of time to that which defined Griselda's banishment, as utterly changed, having suffered 'strange Eclipses' (A3v). Like the female protagonist Roxena of Middleton's later play, *Hengist, King of Kent*; or, *The Mayor of Queenborough* (1615-1620?), '[t]he love of her own lust' makes her, and all women, '[g]allop downhill as fearless as a drunkard' toward certain destruction.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Middleton, *Hengist, King of Kent; or, The Mayor of Queenborough*, ed. by Grace Ioppolo, in *Thomas Middleton: the collected works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.4.172-3.

Bellafront and all of her kind according to Hippolyto, will be 'rid to hell with golden bits',  
through an avenue of former lovers:

The sin of many men  
Is within you, and thus much *I* suppose,  
That if all your committers stood in ranke,  
Theide make a lane, (in which your shame might dwell)  
And with their spaces reach from hence to hell.

(D4r)

Bellafront mourns the instant which ended her virginity and which condemned her to a life of intemperance as a prostitute: 'Curst be that minute (for it was no more. | So soone a mayd is chang'd into a Whore) | Wherein I first fell, be it for ever blacke' (Ev). As a result of her whoredom, Bellafront is temporally defined as living in and for the moment; she has no powers of patient endurance.

Bellafront is thus presented as impatient, temporally and materially consuming and defined by the instant rather than by duration. Marston's Isabella, *The Insatiate Countess* (c. 1607-1608), uses imagery which similarly links the whore's sexual and temporal consumption. She promises to offer Time sexual favours, if he will speed her new lover to her:

Time that devourèst all mortality,  
Run swiftly these few hours, and bring Gniaca  
On thy agèd shoulders, that I  
May clip the rarest model of creation.  
Do this gentle Time  
And I will curl thine agèd silver lock,  
And dally with thee in delicious pleasure,  
Medea-like I will renew thy youth;  
But if thy frozen steps delay my love,  
I'll poison thee, with murder curse thy paths,  
And make thee know a time of infamy.<sup>36</sup>

In this play, the 'whore' literally consumes Time by sexually possessing it as a lover and by impatiently denying chaste delay.

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<sup>36</sup> John Marston and others, *The Insatiate Countess*, *The Revels Plays*, ed. by Giorgio Melchiori (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 3.4.1-11.



Intemperance is frequently employed as an image of sexual subversion in these plays. An inability to keep the right time is a reflection of moral inconstancy. By 1599, personal watches were becoming more common amongst the aristocracy in England and were loaded with significance as tokens of economic and social power.<sup>37</sup> This conspicuous consumption of time is evident in the Milan of part two of *The honest whore*, when Infelice uses a temporal metaphor to imply Hippolyto's infidelity:

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <i>Infae.</i> | how workes the day, my Lord, (pray) by your watch?                               |
| <i>Hip.</i>   | Lest you cuffe me, Ile tell you presently: I am neere two.                       |
| <i>Infae.</i> | How, two? I am scarce at one.  |
| <i>Hip.</i>   | One of vs then goes false.   |
| <i>Infae.</i> | Then sure 'tis you,<br>Mine goes by heauens Diall, (the Sunne) and it goes true. |
| <i>Hip.</i>   | I thinke (indeed) mine runnes somewhat too fast.                                 |
| <i>Infae.</i> | Set it to mine (at one) then.  |

(E2r)

Here Infelice's correct time is associated with fidelity, whereas Hippolyto's adultery runs fast; he is temporally unbound in his adulterous wooing of Bellafront. Unregulated time suggests the sexual transgression of the desirous against the chaste who, although in some ways immortal, are like Griselda still willing to be ordered by the rules of temporal propriety.

These texts figure female sexual subversion temporally through the impatient *action* of the shrew and the whore which is, paradoxically, presented as subversively *delaying* male authorised action. As I have outlined in my introduction, there are many models in the early modern period for the presentation of women as sexual temptresses who delay men on their quests for legitimate social and sexual fulfilment. In part one of *The honest whore*,

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<sup>37</sup> See Amy Boesky, 'Giving Time to Women: the Eternising Project in Early Modern England', in *This double voice': gendered writing in early modern England*, ed. by Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 123-41.

Bellafront is presented as one such sexual agent of delay. She waylays Hippolyto, who is mourning for the 'dead' Infelice, as he tries to leave the brothel Matheo has forced him to visit:

*Hipo.* Is the gentleman (my friend) departed mistresse?  
*Bell.* His backe is but new-turnd syr.  
*Hipo.* Fare you well.  
*Bell.* I can direct you to him.  
*Hipo.* Can you? pray.  
*Bell.* If you please stay, heele not be absent long.  
*Hipo.* I care not much.  
*Bell.* Pray sit forsooth.  
*Hipo.* I'me hot.

(D3r)

The tests to which Viola and Gwenthian, as impatient shrews, subject their husbands are similarly positioned as delaying tactics. They prevent their husbands from attaining their goals. Gwenthian prevents Sir Owen from entertaining the Marquess, thus delaying his social advancement at court, and Viola dramatically 'delays' Candido by having him incarcerated in Bedlam. As temptresses, these women's subversive sexual and social actions delay their husbands.

As I have argued in this section of the chapter, women who refused to wait, who were active rather than passive and driven by sexual desire, were presented as temporally unbound and subversive in their denial of the authorising delay of patience. Like Eve, their choice to take action poses a direct challenge to the authority of patriarchal society which demands female passivity and subjection. These women are presented as sexual temptresses whose natural feminine tendencies toward subversive action work to delay men on their virtuous quests for legitimate genealogical continuation. In the same way that the delays of virtuous femininity (patience and chastity) work to prevent male sexual fulfilment and to authorise female delay in a way which posits a challenge to patriarchal order, the *actions* of female vice (impatience and sexual immodesty) similarly delay male satisfaction. The

whore and the shrew are simultaneous manifestations of both female subversive action and female subversive delay. Ultimately, therefore, women are figured as agents of male delay whether they are passive virgins or active whores. This suggests the multiplicity of ways in which gender and time can intersect on the early modern stage. In the final two sections of this chapter, I consider the figure of the patient man in *The honest whore* plays and beyond, and suggest that both men and women can in fact *act* through the delay of patience. I argue that as a result, patience not only feminises men, but can be employed to temporally define authorised and active masculinity.

#### iv      **The dual temporality of patience**

The concept of patience is in fact as oxymoronic as the identities of either the ‘honest whore’ or ‘patient husband’. Patience is concerned with an enduring persistence; it is a willingness to submit passively to potentially unending suffering through which the patient man or woman is brought to God. However, the nature of patience is itself digressive; it is predicated on waiting and on delay and therefore is resistant to dynamic linear progression. Patience is therefore defined as both the ability to embrace suffering as an identity of perpetual delay and yet also the ability to treat suffering *as* a delay by actively striving to bring it to a conclusion. The confused temporality of patience is manifest in its etymology. As I have suggested, ‘patient’ and ‘passion’ are both linked to the concept of suffering and the uncomplaining acceptance of a necessary pain. However, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these words take on new meanings which stress the importance of *acting* rather than just *enduring* to achieve an ending. The first instance of the use of the word patience to convey ‘[c]onstancy or diligence in work, exertion, or effort; perseverance’ is in 1517.<sup>38</sup> Passion comes to mean both ‘[i]ntense anger’ and ‘[s]trong affection’ in the sixteenth century (1524 and 1590) and in 1648 it is linked directly to ‘[s]exual desire’ and impulsive response.<sup>39</sup> Patience and passion thus develop dual definitions as words which indicate both the passive bearing of affliction and the importance of human agency in the negotiation of life’s trials.

Other contradictions inherent in the conceptualisation of patience can be explored at an etymological level. I have argued that by defining patience in line with the delays embodied in the virtues of chastity, silence and obedience, the patient wife is created as controlled, contained and by extension, in physiological terms, continent. However, delay,

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<sup>38</sup> *OED Online*, patience, n.<sup>1</sup>.1.e.

<sup>39</sup> *OED Online*, passion, n.7.a, n.8.a, n.8.b.

as it defines virtuous femininity via patience, also defines subversive femininity: chastity as a virtue frustrates male sexual desire and the sexual action of the whore delays virtuous masculine action. This association of sexually subversive femininity with delay is evidenced in early modern lexicons, which use delay to describe a negative, incontinent slackness and uncontrolled dilation.<sup>40</sup> The copia of delay as a concept thus marks it as expressive of female sexual subversion at the same time as is a tool for female sexual repression through the virtues of chastity and patience. Women's bodies were conceived as naturally leaky vessels and as I have suggested, patience works to control and contain them by delaying the natural propensity of women for subversive action which was considered to be the result of a specifically female delayed development. However, patience as a delay also manifests that leakiness: the spreading incontinence of dilation defines delay and by association, defines patience.<sup>41</sup> This incontinence is in turn linked with a lack of constancy. Although patience is presented as stable, grounded, solid and unmovable on its pedestal, as William Cowper suggests, it can also be 'moonied' out of its place (Cowper, 3P4r). I have suggested how, in part two of *The honest whore*, the moon is used as an image of female changeability, decay and sexual subversion. Therefore ultimately, both the patient woman and the whore are presented as threatening in their instability, an instability which is both controlled by and simultaneously manifest in, the delay which defines patience.

The action which I am suggesting was an inherent part of the conceptualisation of patience was also presented positively in the sermons and treatises of the early seventeenth century as a tool for active self-improvement. In the 1620s Cornelius Burges and William Jones produced treatises on patience which stressed its pragmatic function in the present

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<sup>40</sup> For example, see Florio's *A worlde of wordes*: 'Dilation, a dilation, enlarging or ouerspredding, a delay' (I3v); 'Tardità, slownes, latenes, delay, demur, tediousnes, slacknes, hindring or delaying' (2M2v); 'Tegiolare col tedio, to dallie with, to delay or play with, to put off wantonlie' (2M3v).

<sup>41</sup> See Parker, '*Othello*', on the female body as dilatory.

world rather than its use as a pacifier in preparation for the Day of Judgement. For both Burges and Jones, its effects are broadly threefold. Firstly, patience honours the glory of God. Secondly it benefits the '*Church, or State*, in which we live; resolving to beare patiently whatsoever displeasure, or miserie, that may attend advancing of a common good' (Burges, G3r). Thirdly, it improves our individual lives in the here and now:

The third end is for our owne good, and that foure wayes. First, To try vs. Secondly, To purge vs. Thirdly, To quicken vs. Fourthly. To heape more glory vpon vs. That for these foure ends God sends tribulation vpon vs, it is euident by Scripture.

(Jones, C3r)

In the early seventeenth century, this conceptualisation of patience as an active rather than a passive virtue had become commonplace. Writings on patience increasingly conjured images which position the virtue as a force of regeneration, allowing individuals to grow stronger through hardship. As Samuel Chew highlights, patience had been depicted as a weighted palm triumphing over adversity since Pliny, and bearing weight with patience remains a popular conceit in the Jacobean period (Chew, 117). The Duke of part one of *The honest whore*, for example, comments to Candido that 'me thinks, patience has laid on you | Such heauy waight, that you should loath it' (K4r). References comparing patience to chamomile, which prospers most when trodden under foot, can also be found in the sixteenth century, as early as Lyly's *Eupheus* of 1578 (Chew, 118). A similar metaphor is employed by Antonio as he attempts to calm the Duchess of Malfi; '[*m*]an, like to cassia, is proved best, being bruised'.<sup>42</sup> Perfumes and spices, like patient Christians, prosper and improve as a result of their suffering. A cursory exploration of images of patience in the first decades of the seventeenth century throws up many more such representations of it as an actively improving virtue. It is a tennis ball which rebounds harder the more fiercely it is

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<sup>42</sup> John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, Revels Student Editions, ed. by John Russell Brown (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 3.5.75.

thrown and it is a spreading vine which flourishes the more it is cut back (Cowper, 3P3v).<sup>43</sup> For Cowper, patience is ‘a noble and worthy sort of victory’ which ‘makes a man possessor and master of himself’ (3P3r, 3P4r). In summary, ‘hee who hath patience is invincible’ (Cowper, 3P3v).

Within a Christian eschatological framework, the anticipation of the Day of Judgement is maintained by its constant deferral. Delay impedes humanity’s progression toward the Kingdom of God and in that sense it poses a transgressive challenge to teleological order. However, delay is also the normative state of human existence; the Christian life is structured and defined by delay. The development of the discourse of patience reflects this inherently contradictory conceptualisation of delay as an obstacle which can never be satisfactorily ‘got over’ and yet as the obstacle which constitutes life itself.

Prior to the Reformation, the Catholic Church, through its discourse of religious seclusion, reconciles itself to the potential transgression of the permanently delayed human condition by authorising delay and crediting it with spiritual and moral value. Those living in religious seclusion are abstracted from the temporal order of society, however suffering such abstraction with patience allows them to embrace the delay which is inherent in the human condition, making it the defining characteristic of their existence. Thus patience is used to authorise delay. Following the Reformation, a Protestant reworking of concepts of religious devotion creates this kind of abstraction from social temporality as morally reprehensible. Thus whereas for the Catholic church, the seclusion of monks and nuns expressed their religious devotion, predicated on their patient acceptance of the ‘affliction’ of social abstraction, for the Reformers, with their focus on humanity’s duty toward the

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<sup>43</sup> ‘Like Tennis-bals throwne downe hard, highest rise’: William Browne, *Britannia’s pastorals. The first booke* (London, 1625), Q7r.

family and the commonwealth, this temporal reticence is repositioned as a *rejection* of patience and an unwillingness to suffer the trials of human existence as administered by God. This Protestant refashioning of patience and endurance is evident in the work of Martin Luther:

The life therefore of the Monkes, and the whole rable of the popish religious orders is altogither deuilish, in that they will haue nothing to doe with ciuill or housholde affaires [. . .] For if a married man or a Magistrate complayned vnto them of the troubles either of their household or ciuill affayres, they did not onely not comfort or encourage them patiently to bear those burthens, but perswaded them to forsake those godly kindes of life and to enter into Monasteries [. . .] They knew not that such should rather have bene exhorted to patience, comforted and taught that God had appoynted them to liue in the state of matrimony and to serue the common wealth, that their vocation was of God and pleased God, and therefore they ought not to have forsaken these kinds of life, but if any troubles hapned they ought to have borne them patiently for Gods cause.

(Luther, H4v)

Luther's sermon expresses the reformed conceptualisation of patience not as religious temporal abstraction, but as active social participation.

In the closing scene of part one of *The honest whore*, Candido seems to turn against this tide, advocating patience as a force of endurance rather than an active tool for self-improvement. It is the 'perpetuall prisoners liberty' and 'the bond-slaves freedome', it embraces wrongs, allows the beggar to feel like a king and is the 'hunny gainst a waspish wife' (K4v). Patience is presented as a similarly regulatory and pacifying virtue in Nicholas Breton's poem *The soules immortall crowne consisting of seaven glorious graces* of 1605:

It keepes the Husband chaste vntil he marrie,  
The Wife obedient to her Band of loue  
It makes the Mother for her Childe to tarie.  
And Seruants waite for their Rewards behoue:  
It makes the Sea-man tarie for a winde,  
And poore men waite till richer men have dinde.

(Breton, *Soules*, G2r)



Both Breton's poem and Candido's speech seem to reflect a conception of the virtue as a pacifying rather than an improving force; patience keeps everyone in check. It is possible, therefore, that the audience of *The honest whore* would have recognised Candido's conceptualisation of patience as dated and more in line with a Catholic manifestation of the virtue than a Calvinist one. The play perhaps offers a satirical critique of both Candido as patient man and of Catholic temporality. However, *The honest whore* also suggests that a patient man is 'a Pattern for a King', as the Duke proclaims at the close of part two (L3r). Patience is presented in these plays as defining virtuous masculine action, action which is defined, as I will now suggest, as authoritative by virtue of its power to convert shrewish wives.

In early modern literature, female sexual and social value is predicated on the delay and deferral of male sexual gratification which defines the virtue of chastity. Men therefore are often portrayed as focused on the conclusion of the sexual quest, with women simultaneously the obstacle to their satisfaction and its ultimate goal. Thus whereas the concept of the patient wife aligns well with female virtue as founded on temporal endurance and sexual abstraction, the concept of the *patient* man, despite the ultimate authorisation of Christ's example, lies uneasily with the notion of masculine identity as primarily concerned with sexual 'completion'. The patient man was at odds with the positioning of men as inherently *impatient* in their legitimised desire to generate progeny. Thus the 'monstrous patient man' of Dekker, and Dekker and Middleton's plays, represents a social anomaly which in early modern society is as perverse and degenerate as the female figure of patience is naturally virtuous (B3v).

Candido is lambasted by the gulling gallants and by his wives in both parts of *The honest whore*, and despite the Duke's ultimate veneration of him as an exemplar of the virtue, Viola's assertion that her husband 'haz not all things | belonging to a man' is a critique of his masculine identity which both plays to some extent authorise (A4v-Br). It is Candido's dedication to the womanly virtue of patience and the temporality of delay – which his wife tells him 'makes a foole' of him – that is to blame for his social ridicule (Cv). Candido is mocked for the patience he shows towards his shrewish wives in the same way that Sir Owen, in Dekker, Chettle and Haughton's *Patient Grissill*, is a figure of fun in the Welsh subplot as a result of his patient acceptance of Gwenthian's rebellious behaviour.

However, patience, as I have suggested, is associated with action and self-improvement as well as with passive endurance in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth

centuries. Dynamic images of patience which become increasingly popular in the early seventeenth century are evidence of this authorisation of patience as a masculine virtue and regulatory force, clashing dramatically with the feminised personification of Patience as chaste, passive endurance and abstraction which I have already examined, and which persisted alongside these contrasting male metaphors. Although as discussed, the title page of Cowper's collection of works published in 1623 shows Patience as a woman, seated on a pedestal, Cowper uses an altogether more masculine array of imagery in the text of his treatise to describe patience itself. Patience is a vine which flourishes in response to being cut back and a rock resisting the darts of misfortune (Cowper, 3P3v). Masculine patience is not displayed *on* a monument, instead it is the very material *of* the monument itself. As Candido's wife in part one of *The honest whore* laments, 'I often beate at the most constant rock | Of his unshaken patience, and did long to vex him' (Ir). Burges is sure that 'Patience: being her selfe a grace' is specifically female (G3v). However as 'a cloake to keep off all stormes, a staffe to beare vs vp out of the mire, an helmet to take all blowes', Patience is also presented within a particularly masculine frame of references (Burges, G6v-G7r). It is

a paring-knife that cuts the affliction lesse and lesse till it comes to  
nothing [. . .] Affliction fals on a patient man, as a tempestuous  
storme of haile upon a well-tiled house, that makes a great ratling  
noise without, but does not hurt, nor gets into any roome within  
(Burges, G7v)

Through these appropriations of patience as an active rather than passive virtue, I suggest these texts position patience as a validation of masculine rather than feminine gendered identity.

The male appropriation of patience which we see in the early sixteen hundreds authorises patience as a vehicle for self-improvement by aligning it with the 'masculine' characteristics of drive, ambition and achievement. In both the subplot of *Patient Grissill*, and the Candido plots of *The honest whore* plays, patience becomes a tool for conversion,

rather than the passive expression of a wife's obedience to her husband, or of man's obedience to God. Whereas, in the earlier Griselda stories, the focus remained on Griselda's endurance and quiet suffering, in *The honest whore* plays and in later Jacobean developments of patience as a moral theme, we are directed to consider its restorative powers; when patience is channelled through a *male* conduit, it reins in the disobedient shrew and makes a pliant wife of the impatient whore.

The biblical Job is the most prominent male exemplar of patience in the early modern period. The proverbial patience of Job is tested by God when he takes away his livelihood, his family and his health. Through all his extreme misfortune, Job refuses to lose faith in God. He retains his integrity and his faith as 'a perfect and an upright man' in the face of his great suffering and in opposition to his wife's encouragement that he should 'curse God, and die' (Job 2.3, 2.9). Job is presented via a physiological discourse as inherently male in his patience: he is 'perfect' and complete. However, the fact that he is married to a shrewish wife also suggests that, like Candido, Job is feminised by the delay of his patience as an ineffectual and weak husband. In Henry Smith's *A preparative to marriage* (London, 1591), Smith positions Job's wife as temptress: 'hee did not curse the day of his birth, vntill his wife brake foorth into blasphemie: shewing, that wicked women are able to change the stedfastest man, more than all temptations beside' (Smith, D8v-Er). Ultimately, however, Job is vindicated in his patience as a confirmation of his authority over 'the foolish woman' that is his wife, a vindication Candido similarly achieves by converting his wives in both parts of *The honest whore* (Job 2.10).

The theme of conversion brought about through patience is at the centre of both parts one and two of *The honest whore*. Although Candido may seem to exist, like Griselda, purely to endure the testing administered by his wives, his passivity and patience in fact

*drives* their conversions from scolds to obedient spouses.<sup>44</sup> In orchestrating the development of the comic action in this way, the patient man, no matter how unwittingly, retains an element of the masculine authority the Marquess displays as manipulator of Griselda, of her family and of the entire structure of the narrative of *Patient Grissill* itself. Ultimately, patience and passivity are authorised for men on the early seventeenth century stage because those virtues enable husbands to convert shrewish wives. However, impatient action is not authorised for women on that same stage, despite the fact that it similarly attempts to reassert the patriarchal gendered binary by converting the subversive patient or tyrannical husband. Candido is empowered by his patience to actively change his spouse and assert his authority in a way which Viola and Griselda can never be. Thus the patient man simultaneously asserts the binary opposition which divides male authorised action from female subversive delay by actively taming the shrewish wife, yet also challenges that binary by achieving his wife's conversion passively and by inhabiting an authorised identity of masculine delay.

Unlike Candido, Quieto, the patient man of Middleton's *The Phoenix*, is not directly ridiculed as effeminate. In fact, like Job, he is described by Fidelio as 'a man' who is 'truly a man' by virtue of his patience (12.153). However, I suggest that by associating Quieto with Griselda, there is a suggestion in the text that his patience *is* effeminising. Quieto asserts that he would rather suffer his neighbour stealing his best carpet than take the matter to court and become victim to the ravages of the law's delay: 'I had rather they should pull of my clothes than flay of my skin' (12.190-1). Like Griselda, Quieto is happy to suffer with patience, and his use of this particular metaphor connects him with the patient wife, who literally endures being stripped of her clothes. Quieto actively brings about a

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Ure, 'Patient Madman and Honest Whore: The Middleton-Dekker Oxymoron', *Essays and Studies*, 19 (1966), 18-40 (p. 28).

conversion, that of Tangle, to whom he administers ‘the balsam of a temperate brain’ and who swears at the end of the play to become an ‘honest, quiet man’ (15.319, 345). Thus Quieto’s masculinity is, like Candido’s, paradoxically asserted through the actions of his delayed and patiently effeminate temperament. He is both action and delay, male and female, at once.

Bellafront, the honest whore, is, like the shrew, denigrated for her impatience and her desire to delay men on their path to legitimate social and sexual fulfilment. Also like the shrew, she undergoes a temporal conversion which repositions her as a patient and honest wife. However, through her patience, Bellafront is actually empowered to orchestrate a conversion of her own: that of her prodigal husband, Matheo. It is the conversion of her husband which differentiates her from other patient and impatient wives and which reveals her position as a social and temporal anomaly. Bellafront is a woman who as a whore is defined by her denial of delay and who as a wife is converted to patience, a virtue of passive inaction which she paradoxically employs to actively improve the moral character of her husband. Like Candido, Bellafront is empowered to orchestrate change through the passivity of her patience.

*The honest whore* plays were some of the first ‘city plays’ to be performed by an adult company in a London theatre and among the first to explore the complexities of the relationship between the patient wife and the prodigal husband (Ure, 21). In the first decade of the seventeenth century, this genre presented a series of stock characters which seem to draw on the Griselda tradition: a patient wife is tested by the abuses of a prodigal husband on the one hand and the advances of a lustful youth on the other. These ‘domestic comedies’, as Michael Manheim defines them, are ‘concerned chiefly with contrasting seeming and actual virtue, chiefly in sexual matters. A number of these comedies are built around a juxtaposition of tests, in which hypocrisy and deceit are revealed and condemned

while virtue and patience are glorified.'<sup>45</sup> As I will explore in the next chapter of this thesis, the patient wives of these plays, like Bellafront, actively convert their prodigal husbands through their patience. Thus they are, in this respect at least, paradoxically empowered to act by their identities of delay.

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Manheim, 'The Thematic Structure of Dekker's 2 *Honest Whore*', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 5.2 (1965), 363-81 (p. 365).

## Conclusion

The concept of patience as it is presented in early modern drama and culture reveals the multiple ways in which the axes of time and gender, and the binary oppositions of male / female and action / delay which structure them, intersect to create a variety of contrasting dramatic identities on the early modern stage. Through patience and impatience, female characters are associated with delay and its denial and are, as a result, defined as either virtuous virgins like Griselda, or subversive whores like Bellafront: either way, these women are subjected to temporal control by patriarchal authority. Male characters who deny the delays of patience in order to orchestrate action, like the Marquess, are presented as authorised in their assertiveness, whereas the denial of patient delay for a woman defines her sexual subversion. Men like Candido can be both authorised as delayed through patience and yet simultaneously condemned as effeminate. The fact that, as I have shown, the delay of patience is used in these plays to present *both* women and men as *both* subversive and authorised, suggests a gendered and temporal ambiguity which works against the simple binary constructions of man / woman, action / delay on the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean stage.



## Chapter 3

### Subversive action: the prodigal husband as '[g]lood aged youth'<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, I consider how the opposition of action and delay which shaped the concept of patience in the early modern period similarly shaped that of prodigality. I have argued that, on a fundamental level, patience aligned women with authorised delay in early modern drama, and in this chapter, I begin by suggesting that prodigality aligned men with unauthorised action. I explore how through prodigality we are presented with a variety of temporally defined masculine identities – from unmarried youth to married master – on the early modern stage, and I suggest that these identities negotiate an axis of age in addition to the axes of time and gender I have already outlined. As my consideration of prodigality in *Hamlet* has suggested, a hierarchy of age worked in conjunction with both the gendered and temporal hierarchies I am positing in this thesis to construct youthful male exuberance as, in fact, delayed, and as existing in opposition to active and mature manhood.

In section one of this chapter, I consider how the concept of prodigality and the masculine identities of the prodigal son and husband, as they were constructed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are defined temporally by subversive action. Furthermore, I suggest that prodigality can work to feminise young men by associating them both literally and temporally with the denial of delay which I have suggested defines the whore on the early modern stage. In section two, I argue that the action which defines the prodigal son's period of riotous living is recast as a delay at the moment his father offers him forgiveness. Presenting the period of prodigality as a delay creates the prodigal as both subversive, in that it aligns him with the virgin's reluctance to accept married responsibility – it delays his maturation – and yet also as authorised: it becomes the way

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<sup>1</sup> Heywood, *How a man may chuse*, A3r.

young men mature rather than the way they avoid maturation. It temporally defines prodigality as a controlled period of rebellion which is overseen and legitimised by the prodigal's father. I suggest that prodigal action is, therefore, created as a paradoxically authorised period of delay for young men, which inevitably concludes with their repentance and their reinstatement within the patriarchal family unit. By 'prodigalising' young men, I argue the older generation neutralise the threat their riotous living poses by containing their youthful exuberance within a period of socially approved 'delay'.

The prodigal *husband*, the product of the prodigalising impulse of patriarchal society as I have described it, is the focus of section three of this chapter. This dramatic character type makes his first appearance on the stage in the first decade of the seventeenth century and I suggest he interacts in a variety of ways with the axes of time, gender and age as something of a temporal anomaly. I consider how, as a married master, he is the active head of an economic family unit, however, as an enduring prodigal, his social maturation is delayed by the continuation of his irresponsible actions. In the final section of this chapter, I turn my attention to the women of the prodigal husband narrative: the whores and patient wives who act to convert and tempt the prodigal son / husband, asking whether prodigality can in fact offer a model for authorised female action on the Jacobean stage.

Throughout this chapter, I use of variety of dramatic and non-dramatic texts, including interludes, sermons, conduct manuals, treatises and discourses, in order to examine the concept of prodigality in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the main focus of this chapter is the temporal anomaly of the prodigal husband, and I examine five key prodigal plays from the first decade of the seventeenth century in order to explore this character: *How a man may chuse a good wife from a bad*, *The London prodigall* (1603-1605), *The faire maide of Bristow* (1603-1604), *The Wise Woman of Hoxton* (c. 1604) and *The miseries of inforct mariage* (1605-1606).

i      **‘Ryot, Swearing, Drunkennes, and Pride’: prodigality as action<sup>2</sup>**

The prodigal son narrative as set out in Luke’s gospel follows a basic ten-point structure as outlined by Alan R. Young in *The English Prodigal Son Plays*: the protagonist’s request for his inheritance, the granting of that request, his journey, riotous living and loss of money, his need to work and humiliation, his repentant return, his father’s forgiveness, his reception, the family’s celebration and his elder brother’s embittered refusal to join the revelry.<sup>3</sup> Young argues that this narrative structure was sustained in dramatic and other reworkings of the story because it ‘provides a most affecting portrayal of the eternal conflict between the generations, the painful transition of a youth into responsible adulthood, and the power of love to transcend any account of the frailties of others’ (Young, iv). In this chapter, however, I am less interested in the alleged transcendence and universality of the parable than in the specifics of cultural appropriation, and I would like to suggest a reason for the popularity of the character of the prodigal son / husband in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that is rather different from that put forward by Young. I argue that the parable was repeatedly dramatised on the early modern stage not primarily because of its moral value but because the prodigal is a site for the intersection of the binary oppositions of male / female, action / delay and in addition, youth / age. These binaries, I suggest structured, respectively, the gendered and temporal axes *and* the axis of age, and were foundational to the formation of early modern dramatic identities.

The prodigal is defined in terms of his intemperate actions and his denial of authorised and socially prescribed delays. In the first decade of the sixteen hundreds, as in

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<sup>2</sup> Anonymous, *The London prodigall As it was plaide by the Kings Maiesties seruants. By William Shakespeare* (London, 1605), G4r.

<sup>3</sup> Alan R. Young, *The English Prodigal Son plays: A theatrical fashion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Jacobean drama studies, 89, ed. by James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1979), p. viii.

the preceding century, the parable of the prodigal was used primarily as ‘a warning to youth not to waste away their money with riotous living’ and as ‘a lesson on the vanity of worldly pleasures’, in a variety of media, including ballads, wall hangings, paintings and prints, as well as plays.<sup>4</sup> Definitions of ‘prodigal’ and ‘prodigality’ in the Oxford English Dictionary make it clear that it is the wasteful and extravagant nature of the prodigal’s lifestyle, rather than his repentant return, which delineates the prodigal identity in the early modern period. In 1485, a prodigal is defined as an individual who is ‘[e]xtravagant; recklessly wasteful’ of ‘property or means’.<sup>5</sup> In 1547, a prodigal is similarly ‘[a] person who spends money extravagantly and wastefully; a spendthrift’, and in 1607 the term prodigal is used to describe a ‘person who is wasteful *of* money’.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, definitions of prodigality focus on lavish scales of consumption, reckless lifestyles, abundance, and wastefulness. Of the seven definitions of prodigal as an adjective in the Oxford English Dictionary, the majority of which are from the sixteenth century, only one mentions the prodigal’s repentance.<sup>7</sup> Richard Helgerson, in his book of 1976, *The Elizabethan Prodigals*, claims that it was ‘[n]ot the parable of the Prodigal Son, with its benign vision of paternal forgiveness, but rather the paradigm of prodigal rebellion [that] interested the Elizabethans’.<sup>8</sup> The prodigal’s riotous living provided ‘a pretext for a lively scene of loose women, feasting and merry-making’ and as such titillated audiences under the pretence of presenting a lesson on ‘the importance of filial piety’ (Watt, 204, 205). In the early modern period, it seems, the prodigal son is primarily conceptualised as one who has gone astray, rather than one who finds forgiveness through return. It is his denial of delay and his impious action which defines prodigality both on an etymological level and,

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<sup>4</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap print and popular piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; repr. 1996), p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> OED Online, prodigal, adj.1.a.

<sup>6</sup> OED Online, prodigal, n.1.a, n.1.b.

<sup>7</sup> OED Online, prodigal, adj.2.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 3.

as I shall now suggest, dramatically, through the character of the prodigal on the early modern stage.

The parable of the prodigal son which is recounted in Luke's gospel was a popular point of reference in the drama of sixteenth-century Europe. In the early fifteen hundreds, Dutch and German reformist schoolmasters combined themes of prodigality with the conventions of Terentian comedy, amalgamating biblical and classical sources to stage didactic moralities focused on the necessity of filial obedience.<sup>9</sup> The prodigal son interludes which subsequently flourished in England in the first half of the sixteenth century drew on this humanist tradition, similarly focusing on the wantonness of youth and inevitably presenting a conclusion of maturation and repentance. A brief consideration of two of these interludes in particular highlights the key difference between the pre- and post-Reformation dramatic conceptualisation of prodigality as a temporally defined identity, and yet also makes clear that *both* stress the prodigal's intemperate action. *The Interlude of Youth* (1513-14) is an anonymous pre-Reformation interlude of the morality tradition and is perhaps the first prodigal son narrative seen on the English stage.<sup>10</sup> Youth, the protagonist, meets with various personifications of vice who encourage him to act on what is presented as his natural exuberance. He is led astray by Riot, who introduces him to Pride and Lechery before a final scene conversion in which he sees the error of his ways and swears to lead a more pious life: 'Here all sin I forsake | And to God I me betake' (ll. 738-740).

Some fifty years later, the eponymous prodigal of *Lusty Juventus* (1547-1553) is similarly presented as denying the controlling delays of patience and sobriety by acting

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<sup>9</sup> Madeleine Doran, *Endeavours of Art: A study of form in Elizabethan drama* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954; repr. 1972), pp. 161-5.

<sup>10</sup> Ian Lancashire supports Harbage in offering two possible dates for the first performance of this interlude: Christmas 1513 and Shrovetide 1514. Ian Lancashire, *Two Tudor interludes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p. 18. Quotes from this interlude are from this edition.

recklessly.<sup>11</sup> Like Youth, Lusty Juventus spends his time with vice figures, including ‘Abominable Living’, whom he kisses and serenades with bawdy songs. Both these interludes create the identity of prodigality as one predicated on subversive action and the denial of authorised delays of social propriety. *The Interlude of Youth* offers a particularly Catholic consideration of prodigality, however, by suggesting that through the actions of ‘good works’, men can achieve salvation. This presentation of mankind authorised in action is rejected by the Calvinist doctrine of predestination as expressed by Lusty Juventus, who asks ‘[w]hy should I then in good works delight | Seeing I shall not be saved by them?’ (ll. 222-3). However, at a fundamental level, the repentance of both these prodigals suggests that within a Christian temporal framework, the delay of patience, in opposition to the intemperate actions of prodigality, is a necessary and authorising virtue for early modern man.<sup>12</sup>

In the second half of the sixteenth century, prodigal characters continued to be popular in both dramatic and non-dramatic works, and are central to Gascoigne’s *The glasse of gouerment* (1575), Lyly’s *Euphues and his England* (1580), the anonymous *The famous victories of Henry the fifth* (1583-1588) and Shakespeare’s *The History of Henry the Fourth (I Henry IV)* (c. 1596-1597).<sup>13</sup> Central to all representations of prodigality in the second half of the sixteenth century is a period of riotous spending, during which the prodigal wastes away his inheritance in taverns and with whores. This active consumption of women and beer, which is often linked to gambling, is, I suggest, a negation of the

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<sup>11</sup> J.A.B Somerset dates this interlude to 1550. J. A. B. Somerset, ed., *Four Tudor Interludes* (London: Athlone Press, 1974), p. 1. Quotes from this interlude are from this edition.

<sup>12</sup> Other prodigal interludes include the anonymous *Nice Wanton* and *Impacyente pouerte*, both printed in 1560.

<sup>13</sup> George Gascoigne, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge and Sir Philip Sidney are all labelled by Richard Helgerson as ‘Elizabethan prodigals’. These ‘gentlemen-prodigals’ produced work in the last quarter of the sixteenth century which followed the prodigal pattern of ‘admonition, rebellion, and (usually) repentance’, a pattern which Helgerson argues also structured their own literary careers. They had ‘wasted their youthful time on the poetry and fiction of love’ and they all equate ‘literature with youthful folly’, as, he suggests, did an entire generation of Elizabethans (pp. 14, 12, 4).

delays of social propriety; the actions of the prodigal son are presented as intemperate and impatient. As Alexandra Shepard suggests in *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, youth is defined in conduct literature of the period by its inherent instability. The main vices for which young men are condemned are connected with their ‘intemperance and pride’ (Shepard, 26). By consuming his cash too quickly, youth wastes his resources through ‘lust, drunkenness [and] anger’ in the same way that he wastes his time; his impatience is a denial of socially authorised ‘delays’ of ‘discretion, self-control, thrift, order, and respectability’ which signal mature and authorised manhood (Shepard, 26). The temporal transgression of youth is made clear in *The Christian mans closet*, a discourse printed in 1581 which presents prodigal sons as always ‘in company with wanton Harlottes, and vnchast women, and with riotous Ruffians, and intemperate men’.<sup>14</sup> One of the speakers of the discourse, Theodidactus, defines education as necessary in order to bring youth out of ‘that lubrick and slippeie age, from great intemperauncie whereunto it is naturally inclined’ (X4r). Lorna Hutson describes the Elizabethan prodigal as violating the temporal rules of reciprocity which structured early modern gift culture. Hutson presents prodigality as ‘the abuse, by anticipation, of the reciprocal flow of gifts and credit from benefactor to recipient and back’.<sup>15</sup> The prodigal, for Hutson, denies the necessary delays which structure gift exchange by greedily consuming rewards before they are due.

This temporal positioning of prodigality persists in non-dramatic works of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. James VI and I directly associates the consumption of money with the consumption of time in his *Basilikon Doron*. He complains about ‘vaine Carders & Dicers, that waste their moyen, and their time (whereof few

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<sup>14</sup> Barthelemy Batt, *The Christian mans closet Wherein is conteined a large discourse of the godly training vp of children: as also of those duties that children owe vnto their parents, made dialogue wise, very pleasant to reade, and most profitable to practise, collected in Latin by Bartholomew Batty of Alostensis. And nowe Englished by William Lowth* (London, 1581), H2v.

<sup>15</sup> Lorna Hutson, *The usurer's daughter: male friendship and fictions of women in sixteenth-century England* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 118.

consider the pretiousnes) upon prodigal & continual playing'.<sup>16</sup> At the turn of the century, the moral prodigal interludes which had been so popular in the earlier sixteen hundreds were parodied in Marston's *Histrion-mastix* (1598-1599), which presented audiences with a dramatist penning and performing an interlude called 'the Prodigall Childe'.<sup>17</sup> The parable of the prodigal was not only parodied, but was employed to ridicule others, as Middleton's collection of poems, *Microcynicon*, which presents 'six snarling satires', one of which is called 'Prodigal Zodon', suggests.<sup>18</sup> Like many of the later Jacobean prodigals, Middleton presents Zodon, who Wendy Wall describes as '[a] typical Renaissance social climber' whose 'extravagance blurs into lust', as surrounded by the trappings of material wealth (*Microcynicon*, Introduction, 1970). He wears '[s]uit upon suit, satin too too base,- | Velvet laid on with gold or silver lace', and rides in a chariot 'gilded oe'r', which is depicted '[f]loating on golden seas of earthly treasure | (Treasure ill-got by minist'ring of wrong)' (ll. 17-18, 23, 56-7). That treasure he spends on

lascivious wantons which await  
And hourly expect such prodigality,  
Lust-breathing lechers given to venery

(ll. 60-2)

<sup>16</sup> James Stuart, *Basilikon doron Devided into three bookes* (1599), V2v.

<sup>17</sup> John Marston, *Histrion-mastix Or, The player whipt* (London, 1610), Cr. William Prynne's anti-theatrical tract of the same name as Marston's play figures play-goers as prodigals: 'The second consequent or effect of Stage-playes; is a prodigall, sinfull, vaine expence of money, which should be more profitably, more charitably disbursed, then in supporting Playes or Players'. William Prynne, *Histrion-mastix The players scourge, or, actors tragaedie, divided into two parts. Wherein it is largely evidenced, by divers arguments, by the concurring authorities and resolutions of sundry texts of Scripture ... That popular stage-playes ... are sinfull, heathenish, lewde, ungodly spectacles, and most pernicious corruptions; condemned in all ages, as intolerable mischiefes to churches, to republickes, to the manners, mindes, and soules of men. And that the profession of play-poets, of stage-players; together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of stage-playes, are unlawfull, infamous and misbeseeming Christians. All pretences to the contrary are here likewise fully answered; and the unlawfulness of acting, of beholding academicall enterludes, briefly discussed; besides sundry other particulars concerning dancing, dicing, health-drinking, &c. of which the table will informe you.* By William Prynne, an utter-barrester of Lincolnes Inne (London, 1633), 2R3v.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Middleton, *Microcynicon: Six Snarling Satires*, ed. by Wendy Wall, in *Thomas Middleton: the collected works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).



Middleton's satire is an example of how increasingly, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, the money prodigals traditionally wasted on the transitory pastimes of gambling, drinking and whoring is represented as being invested in tangible commodities.

For Middleton, the prodigal son's position is precarious, as the closing couplet of the poem suggests: 'See, youthful spendthrifts, all your bravery, | Even in a moment turned to misery' (ll. 77-8). The prodigal's lack of foresight, his failure to plan for the future and his resulting unstable social position as Middleton describes it, is a common aspect of the prodigal narrative as it is presented at the turn of the century. Sermons from the same period also present the prodigal as living in the moment with no concern for the future. In a sermon *Of the prodigall sonne*, printed in 1601, the author bemoans that '[c]hildren consider no more then that which is before theyr eyes, neyther doe they fore-cast things to come'.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Samuel Gardiner in *The portraiture of the prodigal sonne* printed in 1599, describes the prodigal's 'hastines and rashnes, not having a wise foresight, and prospect to the ende'.<sup>20</sup> The prodigal has no concept of his progression *through* time, he cares only for the present moment. Thus the prodigal is both associated with whores in a literal sense, in that he spends his hours with them in taverns and brothels, and is also aligned with them on a temporal level. Like the whores described in Chapter 2, the prodigal lives in the present moment with no regard for past or future, rapaciously consuming both goods and time. This temporality, which as I will go on to explore, also defines the revenger on the early modern stage, therefore risks feminising the prodigal son by connecting him with the subversive figure of the whore.

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<sup>19</sup> S. I., *Certaine godlie and learned sermons Made vpon these sixe following parables of our Sauour Christ, declared in the Gospell. 1. Of the vncleane spirit. 2. Of the prodigall sonne. 3. Of the rich man and Lazarus. 4. Of the wounded man. 5. Of the vnmercifull seruant. 6. Of the faithfull seruant.* By S.I. (London, 1601), F5r.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Gardiner, *The portraiture of the prodigal sonne liuelie set forth in a three-fold discourse. 1. Of his progresse. 2 Of his regresse. 3. Of his ioyfull welcome home.* Published by Samuell Gardiner Batchler [sic] of Diuinitie (London, 1599), A7r.

The prodigal's sexual and social subversion, like that of the whore, is presented as threatening the stability of the marital unit. By 1622, William Gouge's *Of domesticall duties* identifies '[p]rodgialitie' as one 'of the vices contrary to the good prouidence of husband and wife', listing 'hunting, hauking, carding, dicing, eating [and] drinking' as the prodigal actions which endanger marital tranquillity (Gouge, R8r). Thus Gouge introduces us to the figure of the prodigal *husband*, who I suggest is presented on the early Jacobean stage as sharing a temporal identity with the sixteenth-century prodigal sons I have here examined. However, the prodigal husband's impatience and temporal impropriety is not only manifested in his consumption of whores and beer and the material trappings of lavish living, but also in his consumption of wives.

'How hastie these husbands are', Frances reflects in *The London prodigall*, as her own husband-to-be, the prodigal Civet, rushes her to wed (E3v). Her complaint succinctly expresses the rejection of patience which defines prodigal husbands on the early Jacobean stage, and which links them to their prodigal son forbears. As Flowerdale senior declares in this play, his son 'thinkes of nothing but the present time' (D3r). As I will suggest, the prodigal husband's denial of delay is presented not only via his rapid consumption of material goods and whores, but by his devouring of spouses and their dowries, as well as his disregard for the social rituals of courtship, betrothal, mourning and grief.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, plays which utilised the parable of the prodigal son found popularity in London's permanent playhouses. Rosalyn Knutson cites a 'new trend in prodigal plays' in the repertory of the King's Men beginning with the performance of *All's Well That Ends Well* (1602) which Knutson dates to 1599.<sup>21</sup> Knutson suggests that whereas dramatic interest in prodigal narratives may have dipped in the 1580s

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<sup>21</sup> Roslyn L. Knutson, 'Shakespeare's Repertory', in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 346-61 (p. 354).

(I can only identify *The famous victories of Henry the fifth* as fitting the prodigal mould in that decade), the theme of prodigality returned to the stage with a renewed vigour at the turn of the century as a result of a cross-company focus on ‘plays about domestic relations’ (Knutson, 357). Andrew Clarke suggests that this hunger for plays of domestic incident had declined by the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century to be replaced by a demand for romances and comedies of manners.<sup>22</sup> Whereas the appetite for domestic comedies and tragedies may have come to an end in 1608, it is clear from Alan R. Young’s vast survey of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prodigal son drama that the prodigal son narrative continued to be popular well into the 1630s, with plays such as Jonson’s *The Staple of News* (1626), Heywood’s *The English Traveller* (c. 1627), and Thomas Randolph’s *The Prodigal Scholar* (c. 1623-1635) all printed in that decade (Young, 318-320).

In 1902, Arthur Hobson Quinn’s edition of *The faire maide of Bristow* drew attention in its introduction to the cluster of prodigal *husband* plays which were performed and printed between the years of 1602 and 1607 and which Quinn argued formed a clear subset of the prodigal son genre.<sup>23</sup> This generic niche encompasses five core plays which share many similarities in character, plot and theme: Heywood’s *How a man may chuse* and *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*, the anonymous *The London prodigall* and *The faire maide of Bristow* and Wilkins’ *The miseries of inforct mariage*. These plays introduced a new character to the traditional prodigal narrative: the patient wife. In 2000, Paul Edmondson added *Patient Grissil*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) and both parts of *The honest*

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<sup>22</sup> Andrew Clarke, *Domestic Drama: A Survey of the Origins, Antecedents and Nature of the Domestic Play in England, 1500-1640*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature: Jacobean drama studies, 49, ed. by James Hogg, 2 vols (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1975), II, p. 222.

<sup>23</sup> Anonymous, *The Faire Maide of Bristow, A Comedy, now first reprinted from the quarto of 1605*, ed. by Arthur Hobson Quinn (Boston: Ginn & Co. for the University of Philadelphia, 1902), p. 29.

where to this subset.<sup>24</sup> By looking more generally for abused wives and abusive husbands, it is possible to expand the genre to include plays such as *Measure for Measure* (1604), *Othello* (c. 1603-4), and *All's Well that Ends Well*, all performed in the first decade of the seventeenth century and all featuring, to varying degrees and in various forms, patient wives and 'prodigal' husbands.

Although critics such as Quinn and subsequently Clarke and Edmondson have recognised this subset in the genre of prodigal son plays, none of them has commented on why this temporary shift from prodigal son to prodigal husband occurred in the first years of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, none of them make any special comment on why the prodigal son story was combined with that of the patient wife at this time, a character from an independent narrative tradition, as explored in Chapter 2. I attempt to fill this critical gap by examining these plays and suggesting why these unmarried youths become married masters on the early Jacobean stage.

The prodigal's denial of delay – his impatience – is manifest by both his refusal to wait for his inheritance and by his consumption of that inheritance once he has it: his impatience is expressed in material terms through his financial greed. As the protagonist Scarborough's brother John suggests in *The miseries of inforct mariage*, the prodigal husband's riotous living similarly defines him as one of those 'as wast their goods, as Time the world | With a continuall spending'.<sup>25</sup> This association of the prodigal's temporal impropriety with material greed, wastefulness and destruction becomes pronounced in the early seventeenth century, when the prodigal husband of city comedy – a genre notoriously focused on satirising the excesses of material consumption which were considered to be

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Matthew Edmondson, 'A Critical Edition of *The London Prodigal*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 2000), p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> George Wilkins, *The miseries of inforct mariage As it is now playd by his Maiesties Seruants. By George Wilkins* (London, 1607), E2v.

foundational to the social and financial ambitions of the middling sort in London – is introduced to the Jacobean stage. Matheo, Bellafront's prodigal husband in both parts of *The honest whore*, illustrates this when he exclaims that he 'cannot live without siluer' chanting in a frenzy that he '[m]ust haue money, must haue some, must haue a Cloake, and Rapier, and things [. . .] Must haue cash and pictures [. . .] must haue money' (*Part two*, E4r). As a prodigal, Matheo is as greedy to consume material goods as his wife once was as a whore.

Like Youth of the Tudor interlude, these young men – both at the beginnings of these plays before they are married and are still, therefore, classed as prodigal sons, and after the marriages which transform them into prodigal husbands – are portrayed as refusing to wait and as rushing headlong with 'fantastic and giddy humour' into impious actions which waste the riches they are in such a hurry to attain.<sup>26</sup> Flowerdale's father in *The London prodigall* defines his son as ruled by '[r]yot, Swearing, Drunkennes, and Pride' (G4r). Chartley of *The Wise Woman of Hoxton* accepts that '[k]navery and riot' have ruled his behaviour, and Scarborough in *The miseries of inforct mariage* 'in ryot swims' (*Wise*, 5.2.246, *Miseries*, E4v). This riotous action is not, however, only inspired and fuelled by the acquisition of an inheritance and of the material goods that inheritance finances, but by the acquisition of a bride. It is through their wives' dowries that these prodigals realise and waste their fortunes. Prodigal *husbands* grasp at and consume both their wives and their wives' fortunes, rushing through marriages, in the same way that prodigal *sons* grasp at and consume inheritances and whores.

The negation of the delays of marital and sexual propriety is apparent in all five core prodigal husband plays I am examining in this chapter. Four of those plays present us

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<sup>26</sup>Thomas Heywood, *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*, Globe Quartos, ed. by Sonia Massai (London: Nick Hern Books, 2002), 1.2.206.

with prodigal *sons* in their first scenes who are impatient to sexually possess their potential brides.<sup>27</sup> These sons all express their prodigality by refusing to carry out the conventional delays of courtship and betrothal which structure an individual's progress toward marital union. In *The faire maide of Bristow*, Vallenger is portrayed as rash and impatient when the prospect of marriage is within sight. He attempts to will away the hours which stand between him and the solemnisation of his union with Annabelle. Annabelle's father is also keen to ignore the ceremonial delays of courtship and betrothal. Rather than waiting a month to allow time for the banns to be read on three consecutive Sundays before the service (which was accepted, if not always observed, practice), he assigns the very next day as appropriate for their official marriage ceremony. Vallenger is of course overjoyed at this avoidance of delay, exclaiming: 'Sir, I wish it were to night before to morrow, | And by your daughters leaue, seale it with a kisse'.<sup>28</sup> It seems even one afternoon is too much of a pause for him to endure.

A denial of authorised ritual delay also characterises the marriage of Chartley and Luce in *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*. In the first scene of the play, Chartley, the dicing prodigal, claims that 'I can better endure gyves, than bands of matrimony' (1.1.49-50). However, following his betrothal to Luce, he succeeds in convincing his bride and her father that the solemnisation of their union should happen the very next day:

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>Luce's father</i> | When shall the merry day be?   |
| <i>Chartley</i>      | Marry, even tomorrow, by that we can see.<br>Nay, we'll lose no more time. I'll take order<br>for that.          |
| <i>Luce</i>          | Stay but a month.  |
| <i>Chartley</i>      | A month! Thou can'st not hire me to't. Why<br>Luce, if thou be'st hungry, can'st thou stay a<br>month from meat? |

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<sup>27</sup> The exception, *How a man may chuse*, tells us Young Master Arthur was unhappily married before the action of the play begins.

<sup>28</sup> Anonymous, *The faire maide of Bristow As it was plaide at Hampton, before the King and Queenes most excellent Maiesties* (London, 1605), Br.

In Luke's parable, the prodigal son asks his father to give him 'the portion of goods that falleth *to me*', and we are told that his father 'divided unto [his sons] his living' (Luke 15.12). Although Chartley, like Vallenger in *The faire maide of Bristow*, does not directly express that he is marrying to finance his prodigal lifestyle, the language he uses creates a financial context for his prodigal negation of Luce's proposed delay. Chartley is also keen to possess and consume his living – Luce, the 'little property', as he calls her, whom he desires – and like his biblical forbear, he refuses to wait before coming into his marital inheritance (1.2.118).

The character of Ilford in *The miseries of inforct mariage* presents the prodigal negating another socially prescribed delay. Ilford learns of his father's death, and although he is keen to avoid the formality of attending his funeral, in conversation with his friend Bartley, he reveals that he is more than happy to seize his lands:

*Ilf.* Troth no, Ile go down to take possession of his land, let the country bury him & the wil: Ile stay here a while, to saue charg at his funerall.

*Bart.* And how dost feel thy selfe Franke, now thy father is dead?

*Ilf.* As I did before, with my hands, how should I feel my selfe else? But Ile tell you newes Gallants [. . .]

(F3v)

In this amusing exchange we are witness to Ilford's mercenary disrespect for the conventional social ritual of his own father's funeral. Later in the play, Ilford's denial of the delays of death – the socially prescribed rituals of mourning – is transformed into the denial of another kind of delay, that of courtship and betrothal. He negates the delay of courtship completely by projecting himself into an intricately fantasised married future:

now doe I see the happines of my future estate, I walke me as to morrow, being the day after my marriage, with my fourteene men in Liuerie cloakes after me, and step to the wall in some cheefe streete of the Citty, tho I ha no occasion to vse it, that the Shop-

keepers may take notice how many followers stand bare to mee [. . .]  
.] I wil get me selfe into grace at Court, runne head-long into debt,  
and then looke scruily vpon the Citty, I wil walke you into the  
presence in the afternoone hauing put on a richer sute, then I wore  
in the morning, and call boy or sirah [. . .] indeede I will practise all  
the Gallantry in vse, for by a Wyfe comes all my happines.

(G3r-G3v)

This elaborate self-indulgent fantasy reveals Ilford's faith in the financially transformative power of marriage. He does not only wish the time between the present moment and his marriage were eradicated, as Chartley and Vallenger do; he imagines the whole process of marriage as complete and himself as a husband in the future.

The prodigal's hunger for new wives is most powerfully illustrated by Chartley in *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*. He almost succeeds in having three brides during the course of the play's action. He is presented to us as the epitome of the sexually consuming, yet never satisfied, rogue:

I could like this marriage well, if a man might change away his  
wife still as he is aweary of her and cope her away like a bad  
commodity. If every new moon a man might have a new wife,  
that's every year a dozen. But this, 'Till death us depart' is tedious  
(3.3.78-83)

This kind of disregard for the institute of marriage and for wives as 'bad commoditie[s]' is what drives Delia in *The London prodigall* to perpetually delay sexual consummation by remaining an unmarried woman.

Chartley's wives in *The Wise Woman of Hoxton* also remain virgins, not through choice, but because his inconstancy and prodigal desire to consume *multiple* wives means that even sex is figured as a delay for him, one which prevents him moving on to the seduction of his next potential spouse. His first betrothed, who is rather confusingly called the '2<sup>nd</sup> Luce' in the quarto, has been permanently 'delayed' by his desertion prior to the solemnisation of their union:



this wild-headed, wicked *Chartley*, whom nothing will tame! To  
this Gallant was I, poor gentlewoman, betrothed and the marriage  
day appointed. But he, out of a fantastic and giddy humour, before  
the time prefixed, posts up to London.

(1.2.202-207)

His refusal to wait, manifest in his denial of the solemnisation which is needed to confirm his union with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Luce, has paradoxically positioned her as permanently delayed, until, that is, the Wise Woman orchestrates and performs their solemnisation. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Luce waits in vain for Chartley to consummate their union, whilst he, having lost interest in her, pursues both his new Luce and Gratiana, an additional object of his affections. 2<sup>nd</sup> Luce complains:

it grieves me so much that I am a wife, but that I am a maid too. To  
carry one of them well is as much as any is bound to do, but to be  
tied to both, is more than flesh and blood can endure.

(4.3.49-52)

So, as well as negating delay to get what he wants when he wants it, Chartley, the prodigal husband, is an agent for the delay of both of his patient 'wives'. Both Luces are in a no-man's-land of ambiguous femininity, like Marianna in *Measure for Measure*, they are 'nothing [. . .] neither maid, widow, nor wife'.<sup>29</sup> Like the whore, the prodigal paradoxically delays the virtuous actions of the married spouse through his own subversive denial of delay.

As I have illustrated, the transformation from prodigal son on the Tudor stage to prodigal husband on the Stuart stage manifests in these plays before any marriages take place in the shift from the prodigal son's negation of delay in terms of inheritance to the prodigal husband-to-be's negation of delay in terms of courtship and betrothal. Coming into money and preparing to come into marriage were both events which signalled a youth's

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<sup>29</sup> William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, ed. by John Jowett, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; repr. 1999), 5.1.176-7.

transition into adult life. However, by negating the proper timescales which structure that transition – by not waiting as they should – both prodigal son and prodigal husband-to-be pose a challenge to patriarchal order. The subversive action of the prodigal highlights the fact that on one level at least, identities of delay, such as that of Candido as explored in Chapter 2, confirm Christian piety for both women *and* men in early modern society, and identities defined by a rejection of delay, such as those of the whore and the prodigal, are presented as subversive.

ii      **‘[T]hey that dye most vertuous, hath in their youth, liued most vicious’:  
prodigality as delay<sup>30</sup>**

In this section, I consider how the moment of the prodigal’s repentance and his father’s forgiveness recasts the period of riotous living as a socially authorised delay of maturation. I suggest that prodigality in these plays is presented as a necessary part of the maturation process and of patriarchal order; rather than a way to avoid maturing, prodigality is the way in which youths mature. However, as I will also argue, it is the older generation, as represented by the forgiving father, who has the power to enable the moment of conversion. Thus, the young man is temporally feminised by his father, who disempowers him by defining him, like the reluctant virgin, as ‘delayed’. I outline the ways in which prodigality engages with the binary opposition of youth and old age, which intersects with those of action and delay, male and female, and I suggest that by enforcing and prolonging the identity of prodigality, the older generation create the temporal anomaly of the prodigal husband on the early modern stage to counter the threat posed to social order by the growth in the youth population.

Prodigality is presented in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean theatre as a *necessary* delay in the process of maturation toward legitimised male authority. As Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos suggests in *Adolescence and youth in early modern England*, ‘the predilections and hot temper of the young were assumed to be a stage in the natural course of life’ and as a result ‘such predilections were sometimes also regarded as acceptable forms of youth’s behaviour, which would inevitably disappear in time’.<sup>31</sup> Young male bodies, which were considered to be ‘dangerously overpowered by heat and moisture’, were thought to become naturally colder and dryer with old age. (Shepard, 51). Thus in his

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<sup>30</sup> Anonymous, *The London prodigall*, A2v.

<sup>31</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and youth in early modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 18.

study of the politics of age, *Youth and authority: formative experiences in England, 1560-1640*, Paul Griffiths argues that '[i]t was hoped that young men would depart youth with the appropriate wisdom, prowess, and resources to become householders, employers, husbands, fathers, or magistrates', however it was acknowledged that as part of that learning process, '[e]ven the most conforming godly youth sometimes slipped away to join the fun on the green or in the alehouse'.<sup>32</sup> Alexandra Shepard similarly suggests that 'there is [. . .] evidence that at times youthful misrule was tolerated and even implicitly condoned by those in authority over them', and there is plenty of evidence for this toleration of prodigality as socially acceptable in the prodigal husband plays of the first decade of the seventeenth century (Shepard, 94).

Characters in *The London prodigall* express their opinion that recklessness and impatience are the natural conditions of youth which should be endured and, as a result, are contained. Speeches made by Flowerdale's patient wife, Luce, and her father, Sir Lancelot, present prodigality as a necessary and socially acceptable delay of maturation: a delay which is simultaneously subversive and yet authorised because it *will* eventually be concluded. When Flowerdale begins to court Luce, Sir Lancelot at first spurns him as an 'unthrift' (C2v). Once fabricated information pertaining to Flowerdale's financial viability as a wealthy heir has been leaked to Sir Lancelot, he expresses his changed opinion of him:

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <i>Lance.</i> | I haue heard you haue bin wild: I haue beleeeued it.  |
| <i>Flow.</i>  | Twas fit, twas necessarie.  |
| <i>Lance.</i> | But I haue seene somewhat of late in you,<br>That hath confirmed in me an opinion of<br>Goodnesse toward you. |

(D2r)

The 'somewhat' he has seen in Flowerdale is his falsified inheritance. What is interesting here, however, is Flowerdale's assertion that his prodigality was 'necessary'. This prodigal

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Youth and authority: formative experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 28, 13.

necessity is also put forward by his abused wife. When Flowerdale is arrested on his wedding day, his Luce pleads with his uncle for his release:

Impute his wildnesse syr, vnto his youth,  
And thinke that now is the time he doth repent:  
Alas, what good or gayne can you receiue,  
To imprison him that nothing hath to pay?  
And where nought is, the king doth lose his due,  
O pittie him as God shall pittie you

(E2r)

Wildness and youth are, for Luce, natural and necessary bedfellows. Contained as a particular and transitory period in a young man's life – a period which, traditionally, comes to a natural end at the conclusion of the prodigal narrative with the acceptance of the authorised actions which define empowered masculine maturity – prodigality is accommodated as a delay within the dominant patriarchal ideology of early modern society. Rather than being a subversive delay of adult responsibility, it is an authorised delay which *enables* the young to prepare for that responsibility. Prodigality was used to condone, or at least recognise as unavoidable and therefore contain and disempower, what was considered to be youth's inherent recklessness, by labelling that recklessness – the subversive actions of the prodigal's riotous living – as a delay which would inevitably be concluded. Therefore rather than challenging masculine supremacy by aligning men with feminising delay, the figure of the prodigal shores up the patriarchal authority of men by suggesting that the period of prodigal action will inevitably be concluded with the prodigal's establishment as a married master and head of his own family unit. Thus through prodigality, it seems men are authorised in both their action and their 'delay'.

However, prodigality also presents young men as temporally subversive as a result of this association with delay. I suggest that in the same way that men control women by imposing identities of delay, the older generation subordinate the younger by employing the same temporal strategies in these prodigal plays. Thus I argue it is possible to consider the

prodigal's delay as, in fact, feminising. As Alexandra Shepard argues, the unmarried man is considered to be 'incomplete'; like a woman he is developmentally delayed (Shepard, 74).<sup>33</sup> She suggests that unmarried men who were financially dependent were presented as 'not fully men', and that '[m]arriage was synonymous with manhood' in the conduct literature of the period (Shepard, 210, 75). As women are underdeveloped (delayed) men, so young men are underdeveloped (delayed) mature men. As Shepard argues, '[e]ffeminacy, and its further corruption into bestiality, were the labels given to men's excessive or unchecked behaviour that diverted them from their rational purpose' (Shepard, 29). It is paradoxically the untamed *actions* of the prodigal youth as described in the first section of this chapter which delineate him as effeminate and developmentally delayed. Like the virgin, by resisting marriage the prodigal is presented as delaying the actions of mature and masculine authority which sustain patriarchal authority.

The problem of defining when and how the necessary, yet effeminising delay of youthful prodigality should in fact come to a 'natural' end is explored in *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*. The play begins with one of early modern English drama's most memorable scenes of riotous living. 'Master CHARTLEY, Master SENCER, Master BOYSTER, and Master HARINGFIELD' enter, according to the stage directions which were included in the first quarto of 1638, 'as newly come from play', that is, from gambling (1.1.0.1-2). However, it quickly becomes apparent that their play is far from over, as the four men continue to stake money on stage. Chartley is determined to win what he has lost prior to his entrance by forcing his companions to bet on the material and colour of his hat. As the men become increasingly rowdy, Chartley begs them to 'play patiently' (1.1.67). This expression seems to present a contradictory and almost oxymoronic request. The 'play' of

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<sup>33</sup> On the early modern view that 'youth ended with marriage', see also Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in early modern England: honour, sex and marriage* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), p. 46.

the prodigal is predicated on impatience as we have seen, on not waiting, on negating delay in a rush to obtain and consume material and sexual capital alike. The 'play' of the prodigal can also, however, be sanitised and tolerated, if it is contained as a delay which will come to a natural and orderly conclusion. '[P]laying patiently' thus expresses this inherently contradictory position; both impatiently rushing forward as the nature of the 'game' being played necessitates, yet also patiently holding back and delaying its inevitable conclusion.

Two of the characters Chartley gambles with, Haringfield and Sencer, embody these conflicting temporalities: the prodigal's simultaneous negation of, and existence through, periods of delay. Haringfield patiently pleads with his friends to desist from their 'play', which he sees has come to its natural conclusion:

Give over. Tush, give over; do I pray,  
And choose the fortune of some other houer:  
Let's not like debauch'd fellows, play our clothes,  
Belts, rapiers, nor our needful ornaments:  
'Tis childish, not becoming gentlemen.  
Play was at first ordain'd to passe the time;  
And, sir, you but abuse the use of play,  
To employ it otherwise.

(1.1.86-93)

Play, for Haringfield, has an appropriate place, and more importantly, an appropriate time. Like the prodigal's identity itself, play is a necessary delay which must come to a necessary end. Sencer, on the other hand, negates the authorised delay of play. He rushes through the game like a true prodigal, desperate to realise a materially beneficial conclusion. When Chartley admits that it may well be 'time to give over', Sencer responds that:

All times are times for winners to give over,  
But not for them that lose. I'll play till midnight,  
But I will change my luck.

(1.1.82-5)

Sencer negates the patient delay of contained and authorised 'play' by transforming it into a linear and impatient quest for victory. However, paradoxically, in doing so he also

simultaneously *prolongs* the delay of play. Through their prodigality, this scene suggests these young men both deny delay and enforce it.

The prodigals of these plays persist through a dual temporal identity. They are both defined by the *actions* of their riotous living, which constitute the fabric of the drama the audience are presented with, and by the audience's knowledge of their inevitable repentance and conversion, which will position their prodigality as a *delay* – an entertaining delay – on the path to their social and spiritual maturation. As I suggested in my introduction, delay is defined as an enlarging, extending and lengthening process, but also as suspension of action, a hindrance and a slowing down. Similarly, prodigality is both a prevention of action (the actions of honourable mature masculinity) and yet is defined as a profusion of action. Randall Cotgrave's French / English dictionary defines the prodigal as 'unthriftie, riotous, lauish, wastfull, excessiue in expence' (Cotgrave, 3S6v). Like patience, prodigality contains an inherent temporal paradox, and the prodigal sons and husbands who I suggest are presented as both delayed and as denying delay, bring that paradox to the early modern stage.

The prodigal son's marriage *should* signal his maturation and repentance. The delay which is represented by their prodigality should be concluded with the acceptance of social responsibility which is traditionally a concomitant of marriage. However, the prodigal *husband* on the Jacobean stage persists as a prodigal past that marker of social maturity, extending the delay of prodigality into married life, as Flowerdale senior makes clear in the opening scene of *The London prodigall*. Flowerdale's father, returned from Venice in disguise, asks his brother how his son has conducted himself in his absence. On being told that Flowerdale is a swearer, brawler, drinker and debtor, his father shows no particular concern:



I my selfe ranne an vnbrideled course till thirtie, nay almost till  
fortie, well, you see how I am [. . .] Beleeue me brother, they that  
dye most vertuous, hath in their youth, liued most vicious, and none  
knowes the danger of the fire, more then he that falles into it  
(A2r-A2v)

He believes that Flowerdale's indiscretions are a natural part of his maturation which will come to an end when youth itself comes to an end. However, youth for Flowerdale Senior seems to extend into married middle age.<sup>34</sup> Prodigal son narratives begin with riotous living and end with repentance. The marriages which should, therefore, signal repentance in *The London prodigall*, *The faire maide of Bristow*, *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*, *How a man may chuse* and *The miseries of infort marriage*, however, fail to transform prodigal sons into respectable husbands. The prodigal husband refuses to let marriage end his riotous living.

A consideration of the economic situation in the early seventeenth century suggests that the *delay* of the prodigal's conversion works to disempower the younger generation to the advantage of the old; the prodigal's father asserts his active, mature and masculine authority over his delayed, immature and ultimately feminised, son. The Jacobean economy at the beginning of the seventeenth century struggled to cope with vast population expansion, urbanisation and the ongoing effects of crop failures which had caused famine in the 1590s. A hungry, homeless and increasingly mobile population of young people in the first years of the seventeenth century posed a serious threat to social order. As Paul Griffiths suggests, '[t]he greater visibility of youth at a time of prolonged socio-economic difficulty raised sharper anxieties about young people and orderly socialization' (Griffiths, 5). Flowerdale Senior's delay of maturation and subsequently the prolonging of youthful dependence well into middle age can therefore be considered as a theatrical manifestation

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<sup>34</sup> Paul Griffiths does suggest that the period of youth was contested, with some suggesting it continued into an individual's fifth decade. It was, however, usually individuals who were in their teens and twenties to whom the term 'youth' was applied (pp. 19-25).

of an ideological attempt to manage the threat posed by a dissatisfied youth population. Griffiths suggests that delay was indeed used as a tactic against the young in the period: 'Mindful of economic competition and the glut of young people, authorities often attempted to safeguard the fortunes of settled adult craftsmen and retailers by monitoring entry into service and prolonging journeywork, thereby extending the subordination of youth' (Griffiths, 5). I suggest that similarly, extending an authorised period of 'prodigality' worked to neutralise the threat posed by an otherwise unregulated younger generation. Flowerdale Senior's prolonged running of the 'unbridled course', therefore, can be considered as an example of a strategy of deferral which disempowers the young by delaying their maturation.

The process of subordinating the young by firstly defining their prodigal behaviour as a delay which will necessarily come to an end with their social maturation and then extending the period of that authorised prodigality in order to prolong their dependency, creates the character of the prodigal husband. This strategy of patriarchal domination is critiqued by the prodigal husband plays of the first decade of the seventeenth century, perhaps most powerfully by *The miseries of inforced marriage*. Scarborough, the play's protagonist, does not present any of the characteristics of typical prodigality in the play's opening scenes. Until his betrothal to the beloved but penniless Claire is broken off, and he is forced by his uncle and guardian to marry Katherine for her fortune, Scarborough is a pious and respectable young man, who is conscious of the necessary delays of youth which enable proper maturation:

Scar.        Clare I must leaue thee, with what vnwillingnes  
              Witnes this dwelling kisse vpon thy lip,  
              And tho I must be absent from thine eye,  
              Be sure my hart doth in thy bosome lie,  
              Three yeares I am yet a ward, which time Ile passe,  
              Making thy faith my constant Looking-glasse,  
              Till when.

Clar. Till when you please, where ere you liue or lie,  
Your loues here worne, your presence in my eie.  
(B2r)

Scarborough and Claire are happy to acknowledge the necessary delay of three years which is fundamental to the respectability of their union. Unlike prodigal sons, who are impatient to solemnise their betrothals and sexually possess their wives, Scarborough is prepared, if not happy, to wait. Claire herself also wishes to delay the solemnisation of their betrothal, believing herself to be 'a great deale to young' for marriage (Br). Scarborough acknowledges the importance of a period of youthful development, and paradoxically by embracing the 'delay' of dependence, he evades definition as a prodigal himself. He does not intend, like Flowerdale, to be wild and young, just to be young and to wait.

Despite his willingness to fall in line with the prescribed delays of youth as they are enforced on the young by the old, Scarborough is described by his uncle and guardian in terms which align him with the traditional negation of delay that defines the prodigal son. Directly following the scene in which he demonstrates that he understands the necessity of delaying his marriage to Claire, Lord Faulconbridge discusses Scarborough's merits, as we have witnessed them for ourselves:

Ile te'l you what he is, he is a youth,  
A Noble branch, increasing blessed fruit.  
Where Caterpillar vice dare not to touch,  
He is himselfe with so much grauity,  
Praise cannot praise him with *Hypperbole*:  
He is one whom older looke vpon, as one a booke,  
Wherein are Printed Noble sentences  
For them to rule their liues by. Indeed he is one  
All Emulate his vertues, hate him none.  
(B2v)

However, despite recognising his maturity, Lord Faulconbridge is determined that he should marry immediately, at the age of eighteen, to prevent the possibility of his corruption:

[. . .] being as he is,  
 Young, and vnsetled, tho of virtuous thoughts,  
 By *Genuine* disposition, yet our eyes  
 See daily presidents, hopefull Gentlemen,  
 Being trusted in the world with their owne will,  
 Diuert the good is lookt from them to Ill,  
 Make their old names forgot, or not worth note  
 With company they keepe, such Reuelling  
 With Panders, Parasites, Podigies of Knaues,  
 That they sell all, euen their old fathers graues.  
 Which to preuent, wee le match him to a wife,  
 Marriage Restraines the scope of single life.

(B2v)

Scarborough's guardian creates his ward as a prodigal. Like Polonius, he 'prodigalises' his charge in order to contain the threat his youth poses, assigning him an identity which is familiar and therefore manageable, and which is ultimately defined as a delay on the path to his inevitable social maturation.

Defining Scarborough as a prodigal son denies him authority and delays his maturation. However, Lord Faulconbridge is also uneasy about the potential threat posed by the prodigality he himself has created. Therefore, his second act of authority is to bring the delay of prodigality (which he has imposed) to an end with marriage. This is the paradox faced by aged authority. There is both a desire to disempower the young by prodigalising youth and delaying marriage and yet also a desire to enforce marriage which as an institution signals the conclusion of the period of prodigality and neutralises the threat of youth's potential transgression. As I have suggested, it is, therefore, possible to draw parallels between the temporally controlled prodigal son / husband and the virgin. The identities of delay which patriarchal society enforce on both the prodigal and the virgin in order to control the threat of their potential subversion paradoxically also *creates* both those identities as threatening to patriarchal order: both the prodigal and the virgin subversively resist marriage. Thus in the same way the father controls his daughter through imposing the delay of virginity, the father controls his son through imposing the delay of prodigality. The

prodigal is, therefore, in this respect at least, feminised by his identity of delay, and the binary which separates man and woman is aligned with that which separates old and young on the early modern stage.

Scarborough is a victim of the paradoxical impulse to both enforce prodigality and to end it, an impulse which the text itself exposes and challenges. Ironically, his enforced marriage actually works to create a prodigal *husband* of a young man who was never a prodigal *son*. Scarborough does not delay the conclusion of his prodigality by maintaining his reckless lifestyle *despite* being married, rather he becomes prodigal *because* he is married. Implicit in the critique of the system of wardship which we see in *The miseries of inforct mariage* is a criticism of the naturally assumed authority of age and its propensity to inscribe youth temporally as both subversively active *and* subversively delayed.

Despite the subversion of patriarchal authority which I have suggested is evident in plays such as *The miseries of inforct mariage*, ultimately the narrative of prodigality works to reconfirm patriarchal order. The prodigal son's conversion confirms his readiness for marriage and the prodigal husband's conversion confirms his acceptance of the identity of married master which is, by rights, already his own. The repentance of the prodigal son recasts his period of riotous living as a delay which has been successfully concluded with marriage. The London prodigal Flowerdale proclaims he will 'redeeme my reputation lost' when his wife-to-be swears her obedience to him as her future husband:

Father I know *I* haue offended you,  
And tho that dutie wills me bend my knees  
To you in dutie and obedience:  
Yet this wayes doe I turne, and to him yeeld  
My loue, my dutie and my humblenesse.

(G3r)

Luce's subjection to him inspires him to accept his position and responsibilities as head of the patriarchal family unit. Similarly, at the end of *The miseries of inforct mariage*,

Scarborough as a prodigal husband reasserts his authority over his entire household as a married master. He addresses first his brother, then his wife and children, and finally his servants in turn in his closing speech:

Introth I am sorry I ha straid amisse,  
To whom shall I be thankefull. All silent:  
None speake: whist: why then to God,  
That giues men comfort as he giues his rod,  
Your portions Ile see paid, and I will loue you,  
You three Ile liue withall, my soule shall loue you,  
You are an honest seruant, sooth you are,  
To whom, I these and all must pay amends

(K4v)

Ultimately he commands that '[c]hildren and seruants pay their duty thus', and when they *bow and kneele* to him, he declares that 'all are pleas'd' (K4v). Thus in these plays, the prodigal's conversion enables him to assert his dominance within the family. This is a reassertion of patriarchal authority, which the prodigal no longer challenges, but polices himself.

In this section of the chapter, I have illustrated how the threat the prodigal poses through the action of his riotous living and his negation of delay is controlled on the Jacobean stage by the authorisation of prodigality itself as a hiatus which will come to an end – an authorised dalliance – condoned and therefore controlled. However, like the virgin, the prodigal son is contained yet also created as subversive as a result of his delayed temporality. The process of 'prodigalising' and of authorising and prolonging the 'delay' of prodigality expresses an attempt to control prodigal youth. However in that attempt to reign in the reckless young, the older generation paradoxically *create* prodigal sons, and therefore also enforce marriage in order to bring the threat posed by that prodigality to an end. The result of this paradox is the creation of the character of the prodigal husband, whose anomalous social position and delayed temporality as I will go on to explore, opens up the

possibility of a whole new set of subversive challenges to social order on the Jacobean stage.

### iii From prodigal son to prodigal husband

In this section of the chapter, I examine the identity of the prodigal husband as temporal anomaly and explore the threat to the binary opposition of aged authorised action and youthful subversive delay he poses. All prodigals, as I have suggested, experience a dual temporality: they are defined both by their prodigality as a period of delay and by the denial of delay which is a concomitant of their prodigal action. The prodigal *husband* offers an extreme model of this dual temporality because not only does he delay maturation, but he also delays the authorised actions which should define his married status. Thus although the prodigal husband can be considered the victim of hegemonic strategies of delay, like the virgin he is also presented as manipulating that delay to his own advantage. By delaying his repentance past marriage, the prodigal husband creates himself as a social and temporal anomaly able to challenge the binary opposition of authorised (masculine) mature action and subversive (feminine) youthful delay.

As I have illustrated, *The Wise Woman of Hoxton* begins when the game is over for Chartley, Haringfield, Sencer and Boyster. Chartley, like Sencer, tries to stretch out the dalliance of their play for as long as possible, but he admits eventually that they must ‘leave this abominable game, and find some better exercise’ (1.1.95-7). It does in fact seem that Chartley intends to leave behind the playful preoccupations of youth, putting an end to his delay of maturation with marriage to Luce. ‘Ah, sirrah, me thinks the very name of wedlock hath brought me to a night-cap already, and I am grown civil on the sudden’, he proclaims, shortly after his gambling has been aborted and once the deal with Luce’s father for her hand has been struck (1.2.157-9). However, despite these protestations of conventional maturity, the delay of his playful prodigality does not come to an end with marriage.



Chartley's authorised delay as prodigal son becomes the unauthorised delay of the prodigal husband.

The first indication the audience gets of Chartley's continuing prodigality in *The Wise Woman of Hoxton* comes immediately after he has asserted his new-found civility, as described above. He continues his speech on the joys of marriage by listing a seemingly ever expanding collection of items which he believes will be necessary for his new identity as husband: 'dishes, platters, ladles, candlesticks' are all itemised in his prodigious inventory (1.2.160-1). This accumulation of material artefacts indicates that Chartley, although betrothed, fully intends to continue in his prodigal consumption, which as I have already illustrated was synonymous with the prodigal's riotous living in a variety of prodigal narratives.

Chartley's continued prodigality is also indicated in his following address to Luce, in which he proposes that their marriage remain a secret:

let us be married privately, and Luce shall live like a maid still and  
bears the name. 'Tis nothing, Luce; it is a common thing in this age  
to go for a maid, and be none. I'll frequent the house secretly. Fear  
not girl, though I revel abroad a days, I'll be with thee to bring a-  
nights, my little whiting-mop.

(1.2.173-9)

The clandestine nature of their union enables Chartley to live as a prodigal and enjoy the freedoms of the single life during the day, whilst still reaping the benefits of marriage during evenings spent with his 'wife'.<sup>35</sup> He creates a situation which allows him to continue in his prodigality despite his marriage. In short, he becomes a prodigal husband. Whereas the audience of a prodigal son play could be confident that the 'delay' of the youth's prodigality which constitutes the riotous action of the play itself would come to an end with a final scene conversion, the audience of a prodigal husband play feels as if the action has

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<sup>35</sup> Luce is not in fact his wife, Chartley having been, unbeknownst to him, married to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Luce by the Wise Woman whilst both parties were in disguise.

been delayed from the very beginning: why is this married man *still* a prodigal? Why has his repentance and conversion been deferred? The audience are watching a play which presents the *double* delay of the prodigal husband: the delay of his prodigality, and the delay of the marital maturity which should define his authorised action as a reformed husband.

Chartley authenticates the extension of his prodigality into marriage by making his 'wife' and new father-in-law party to it. When they push to have the marriage made public, thus confirming Luce's identity as a married woman, Chartley begs them to delay the revelation for a month:

Stay but a month; 'tis but four weeks. Nay, 'tis February, the  
shortest month of the year, and in that time I shall be at full age,  
and, the land being entailed, my father can disinherit me of nothing.  
(3.3.149-52)

As a prodigal son, Chartley, as detailed earlier in the chapter, pleaded with Luce and her father to disregard the customary month's delay before the solemnisation of their union. This refusal to wait as an unmarried youth is in some ways acceptable; prodigal sons negate delay, and their fervent impatience is authorised as it defines the necessary and controlling delay of the prodigal phase itself. However, in this manipulation of delay, Chartley disregards the sanctity of marriage not as a single youth, but as a married man.

The continuation of Chartley's prodigality is further confirmed when he meets Gratiana, whom he desires as his next sexual conquest despite only recently, he believes, solemnising his marriage to Luce. Chartley suggests in a soliloquy that there is nothing stopping him from pursuing Gratiana:

So, now am I the same man I was yesterday. Who can say I was  
disguised? Or who can distinguish my condition now? Or read in  
my face, whether I be a married man, or a bachelor?  
(3.3.1-4)

Making it clear that marriage has not satisfied his quest for sexual satisfaction, Chartley is able to carry out his exploits because he has delayed the public acknowledgement of his marriage to Luce. Thus the delay of his repentance which defines his continuing prodigality enables him to delay the declaration of his first marriage and yet also paradoxically enables him to deny delay by prodigally consuming women other than his wife.

About half way through *The faire maide of Bristow*, Vallenger, the archetypal prodigal son who prefers the pleasures of hunting and fighting to the responsibilities of courtship and marriage, becomes a prodigal husband. His new bride, Annabelle, the 'fair maid' of the title, is accordingly created as a patient wife, an identity which is forced on her by her husband's continued reputation for riotous living. Sir Eustace, Annabelle's new father-in-law, addresses her with the following speech, shortly after her marriage to his son has been announced:

Come anaball thou now must be my wife,  
My huswife, and my house keper, and all,  
I know thou hast bin bred up for a huswife,  
Thy husbands a wild boy I confes.  
But let him stay and keep thee companye  
Or by the holy roode he roostes not heer.

(B2v-B3r)

Annabelle must not only ground her wayward husband and prevent him from straying, but she must also play the housewife to his father, who as we see here, intends to take full advantage of the domestic capabilities she has been 'bred up' to possess. The focus of Sir Eustace's speech seems to be on the identity and duties of the patient wife, but at the heart of this passage, and I would like to suggest, of the play as a whole, is the anomaly of the prodigal husband.

Vallenger is both 'husband' and 'wild boy'. This oxymoronic description is likely to have jarred with the play's early Jacobean audience. As Paul Griffiths has explored, in early modern society, 'boy' and 'youth' were terms employed as insults when applied to married

masters, implying incompetency and inadequacy (Griffith, 63). However, I believe Vallenger's father does more than just insult his son by using these opposing terms. As Griffiths also highlights, and as I have previously suggested, '[y]outh was widely held to be a preparative period in which individuals acquired the wherewithal to participate fully in the adult world of work, commerce, marriage, and parental responsibility.' (Griffiths, 27) Therefore by acknowledging his son as a husband and yet still terming him a 'boy', his father defines Vallenger as socially transgressive; he evades categorisation through a hybrid merging of identities and as a result challenges the broadly accepted view that 'marriage defined the border at which young men left behind the idealized dependency of youth and accepted the responsibilities of adulthood and a fresh habit of independence' (Griffiths, 30).

The binary oppositions of action and delay and of youth and maturity which as I have suggested are confused by the identity of the prodigal husband, are directly addressed in *How a man may chuse*. The play begins at the Exchange, where Young Master Arthur complains to his friend, Young Master Lusam, of his marriage to Mistress Arthur, whom he considers to be 'the most hated | And loathed object that the world can yeeld' (A2r). Also at the Exchange are Anselm and Fuller, two young gallants who discuss Anselm's obsession with Mistress Arthur, for whom he pines as a spurned petrarchan lover. Next to enter the Exchange are Old Master Arthur and Old Master Lusam, two geriatric fools who discuss the unhappiness of the marriage between their children. This scene, therefore, establishes a binary opposition between the youth of the Young Masters and the age of the Old Masters. However, Anselm and Fuller's conversation, which divides the dialogues of the young and old parties, suggests a challenge to this binary opposition. Anselm expresses his lovesick desperation in the conventional terms of the petrarchan oxymoron:

An.            I am not old, and yet alas I doate:  
                 I haue not lost my sight, and yet am blind,  
                 No bondman, yet haue lost my libertie,

No naturall foole, and yet I want my wit.  
 What am I then, let me define my selfe,  
 A doatar yong, a blind man that can see,  
 A wittie foole, a bond-man that is free.  
*Ful.* Good aged youth, blind seer, & wise foole,  
 Loose your free bonds, and set your thoughts to  
 schoole.

(A3r)

In a play which is very aware of age (we are constantly being told how old characters are), definitions of youth and maturity and the behaviours expected of the different generations are often confused. Thus I suggest that throughout *How a man may chuse*, we are presented with breaches of social hierarchy which reflect the oxymoronic identity of the prodigal husband as an ‘aged youth’ (A3r).

The authority of age is fiercely satirised in *How a man may chuse* through the characters of Old Master Arthur and Old Master Lusam, who spend the entire play bickering and ineffectually interfering in the affairs of their children. Whereas in other prodigal husband plays, the older generation represent a positively retributive force (as in *The London prodigall*, *The Wise Woman of Hoxton* and *The faire maide of Bristow*) or a negatively oppressive power (as in *The miseries of inforct mariage*), in *How a man may chuse* the older generation seems to have no authority whatsoever. In one scene, Old Master Arthur and Old Master Lusam arrive at Young Master Arthur’s home to chastise the young couple for their constant bickering and ‘to end these broyles that discord hath begunne’ (A4r). They prove themselves to be totally incompetent in their mission, a fact which the audience can predict as they watch the two old men debate, for thirty-seven lines, whether they should knock on the door or assert their ‘authority’ by entering without knocking:

*Old Ar.* Nay but harke you sir, will you not knock?  
*Old Lus.* Is't best to knock?  
*Old Ar.* I knock in any case.  
*Old Lus.* Twas well you put it in mind to knock,  
 I had forgotten it else I promise you.  
*Old Ar.* Tush, ist not my sonnes and your daughters

doore,  
 And shall we two stand knocking? Leade the way.  
*Old Lus.* Knock at our childrens doores, that were a Iest,  
 Are we such fooles to make our selues so  
 straunge  
 Where we should still be boldest? In for shame.  
 We will not stand vpon such ceremonies.

(B3r)

This reversal of the hierarchies of age – which the older generation are here aware of and attempt to correct, but which the satiric tone of the text suggests they fail to rectify – presents a challenge to the accepted order of maturation which mirrors that posed by the oxymoronic prodigal husband.

Pipkin, Mistress Arthur's servant, is one of the key comic characters of *How a man may chuse*, and he too acts to confuse the hierarchies of age in the play. He is sent to school to learn Latin with the suicidal schoolmaster Aminadab. Pipkin delivers a comic speech concerning his prolonged schooling:

let me see what age am *I*, some foure & twentie, and how haue *I*  
 profited, *I* was fiue yeare learning to crish Crosse from great A. and  
 fiue yeare longer comming to F. *I* there *I* stucke some three yeare  
 before *I* could come to q. and so in processe of time *I* came to e  
 perce e, and comperce, and tittle, then *I* got to a. e. i. o. u. after to  
 our Father, and in the sixteenth yeare of my age, and the fifteenth  
 of my going to schoole, *I* am in good time gotten to a Nowne, by  
 the same token there my hose went downe: then *I* got to a Verbe,  
 there *I* began first to haue a beard: the~ *I* came to *Iste, ista, istud*,  
 there my M. whipt me till he fetcht the blood, and so foorth: so that  
 now *I* am come the greatest scholler in the schoole: for *I* am bigger  
 then two or three of them

(E2v)

The continuing delay of Pipkin's education poses a satiric critique of socially acceptable processes of maturation. The ridiculousness of a twenty-five year old schoolboy seems to poke fun at the delayed maturation which I suggest was a strategy employed by aged authority on the early modern stage to tame, by way of prolonging, the waywardness of prodigal youth. Pipkin, as an adult schoolboy, graphically illustrates the oxymoronic

position Young Master Arthur finds himself in as a prodigal husband. As Anselm is an 'aged youth' in his petrarchan pining, and Pipkin is a fully grown schoolboy, so Young Master Arthur is old but made young by his continuing riotous living (A3r).

As well as destabilising his identification with a specific age group as I have suggested, Anselm's love for Mistress Arthur also challenges the stability of his gender identification. The common early modern perception that too much heterosexual desire acted to feminise men is voiced by Fuller, who tells Anselm that:

*I was once like thee,  
A fighter, melancholy, humorist,  
Crosser of armes, a goer without garters,  
A hatband-hater, and a busk-point wearer,  
One that did vse much bracelets made of haire,  
Rings on my fingers, Iewels in mine eares,  
And now and then a wenches Carkanet,  
That had two letters for her name in Pearle:  
Skarfes, garters, bands, wrought wastcoats, gold, stitcht caps,  
A thousand of those female fooleries,  
But when I lookt into the glasse of Reason, strait I began  
To loath that femall brauery, and henceforth  
Studie to cry *peccaui* to the world.*

(B3v)

Women are here associated with the material consumption that is a crucial component of the prodigal's rapacious lifestyle, thus desire is presented as feminising a man in a way which prevents his maturation, trapping him in the prodigal stage of development. As Fuller later warns Anselm, who shows reluctance in pursuing Mistress Arthur with the kind of aggressive force Fuller deems necessary in courtship: '[c]ontinue that opinion, and be sure | To die a virgin chaste, a mayden pure' (B3v). This correlation of femininity with prodigality reveals the connection between hierarchies of age and of gender which I suggest are both structured via negotiations of the binary opposition between action and delay on the early modern stage.

‘Becoming prodigal’ is something which happens to more characters than would at first seem apparent if we consider delay and the denial of delay as the defining elements of prodigality. As much as these prodigal husbands are converted away from prodigality by the plays’ conclusions, their fathers and guardians, and even wives, often ‘turn prodigal’ at some point during the narrative. For example, in the same way that prodigal sons / husbands are berated for their rash intemperance, their fathers become similarly impetuous in their eagerness to bring their sons to justice. In *The faire maide of Bristow*, Sir Godfrey, Annabelle’s father, and Sir Eustace, her father-in-law, are eager to pursue Vallenger once they discover he intends to poison Annabelle in order to marry a courtesan. Their impatience is clear:

There is no dallying in a matter of such wait,  
And therefore let us not be slack in this  
[. . .]  
*Exit the two old men*

(C4v)

As with the portrayal of Old Master Arthur and Old Master Lusam in *How a man may chuse*, there is definite humour in this image of two elderly characters rushing around the stage in pursuit of prodigal youth.<sup>36</sup> The impulsive behaviour of these old men is an exaggerated version of the reckless spirit of the prodigal husband. Annabelle pleads with her mother to prevent Sir Godfrey and Sir Eustace from acting hastily:

Good mother stay them  
This their journey forth,  
May breed some mischief  
Therefore call them back againe

(C4v)

Similarly, in *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*, Luce pleads with her father to ‘[b]e not so rash’ when he proposes rushing to the ‘wedding board’ to prosecute Chartley for his intended

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<sup>36</sup> Arthur Quinn, in fact, names *How a man may chuse* as the main source of this later play (Quinn, 11).



bigamy (4.2.109, 108). This kind of imprudent activity, these plays seem to suggest, should by rights be reserved for prodigal sons.

In this section of the chapter, I have argued that the confusion of hierarchies of age and gender which is the result of the introduction of the character of the prodigal husband on the Jacobean stage, works to challenge the accepted authority of the old and their temporal manipulation of the young. The Jacobean character of the prodigal husband is created by the attempt to contain the threat prodigal youth poses by extending the period of youthful dependency. Ironically, the prodigal husband functions in these plays to challenge the aged authority which creates him. The temporal oxymoron which defines the prodigal husband through both action and delay thus works to both assert and challenge the binary oppositions of youth and age, and as I shall go on to explore in more detail, male and female, which the patriarchal society of the early seventeenth century was dependent on.

iv      **‘I have a project in my brain begot’: patience turns prodigal<sup>37</sup>**

Pious forbearance is personified in the character of the patient wife in these prodigal husband plays. Like Patient Griselda, these wives suffer monstrous wrongs at the hands of their husbands, but never falter in their devotion to them. Griselda’s story is one of extreme endurance in the face of arbitrary spousal cruelty, of the absolute subordination of a wife to a husband. The patient wife of the prodigal husband narratives is similarly a figure whose temporal identity is defined by endurance, abstinence and forbearance. By refusing action, resisting revenge, enduring hardships and accepting the perpetual delay of fulfilled personal desire, the patient wife maintains a ‘delayed’ temporal identity which supports her sexual containment.

Patient Griselda was a key exemplar of early modern female virtue – patient, chaste, silent and obedient – and Andrew Clarke suggests that it was the Dekker, Chettle and Haughton dramatisation of the Griselda narrative which provided the template for the twenty plus plays which featured patient wives in the first decade of the seventeenth century (Clarke, 247). In *The faire maide of Bristow*, Annabelle is told she is the ‘wonder of [her] sex’ when she begs with the King not to punish her husband for attempting her murder (E2v). Similarly, in *The London prodigall*, Luce is proclaimed ‘wonder among wives’ when she forgives the repentant Flowerdale for his abuses, which include his total desertion and his suggestion that she prostitute herself: ‘Why turne whore, thats a good trade | And so perhaps ile see thee now and then’ (G3r, E3r).<sup>38</sup> In *How a man may chuse*, Mistress Arthur is declared ‘the wonder of her sex’, and the ‘[w]onder of women’ (A3v, B2r). ‘Her constancie, modest humilitie | Her patience, and admired temperance’ are

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<sup>37</sup> Heywood, *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*, 4.2.140.

<sup>38</sup> Whereas the patient husband transforms the shrew into the patient wife, it seems the prodigal husband works to transform the patient wife into the whore.

continually praised throughout the play (G4v). Clarke suggests that the ‘Grissil of legendary Italy becomes Grissil of a contemporary London household’ in this play, and that the characterisation of Mistress Arthur is ‘a clear reflection of the influence of conduct books and other literature on domestic relations’ (Clarke, 249, 251). There is certainly plenty of evidence in the play to support Clarke’s analysis. Mistress Arthur is ‘mildnesse, chastnesse and humilitie’ personified, a ‘Sweet Saint’ who must, when faced with her husband’s attempts to kill her, ‘continue still this patience, | For time will bring him to true penitence’ (A3r, Cv). She is her husband’s ‘handmaid’ (D4v). She declares that she will

become your maide,  
Your slaue, your seruant, any thing you will,  
If for that name of seruant, and of slaue,  
You will but smile vpon me now and then.

(Bv-B2r)

When confronted by his abuses, she retains her patient composure: ‘since it is his pleasure | To vse me thus, I am content therewith, | And beare his checks and crosses patiently’ (Cr). I suggest that these delays of patience also, however, suggest a horrifying and almost perverse passivity on the part of these much abused wives. By patiently enduring the trials administered by corrupt prodigal husbands, these women ultimately ask audiences to question the morality of their own obedience. I suggest that by pairing the patient wife with the prodigal husband, these plays challenge patience as a viable identity for those wives, by revealing that patience supports the social transgression of prodigality.

On one level, the patient wives of these prodigal husbands are actually empowered by their patience to actively convert those husbands from their riotous living. Thus I suggest these patient wives are connected to the character of Bellafront from *The honest whore plays*, whose patience, as I have suggested, enables her to actively bring about her prodigal husband’s conversion. However, wives claiming agency in this way are also presented as anomalies of passive femininity. For women, taking action, even if that action

is taken to re-establish marital harmony and their reckless husbands' authority, is a denial of the passivity which is necessary for female virtue, and as a result is presented in these plays, as I will now illustrate, as a declaration of a subversive *female* prodigality.

The stable identities of prodigal husband and patient wife are confused on a very literal level in *How a man may chuse*. Once Young Master Arthur has expressed his intent to abuse his wife in the sexual pursuit of a courtesan, Old Master Arthur presents his daughter-in-law to Justice Reason in the hope that something can be done about his son's continuing prodigality in marriage:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <i>Old Art.</i> | Heer's the gentlewoman<br>Wife to my sonne, and daughter to this man,<br>Whom I perforce compeld to liue with vs. |
| <i>Iust.</i>    | All this is wel, here is your sonne you say,<br>But she that is his wife you cannot finde.                        |
| <i>Yong Lu.</i> | You do mistake sir, heer's the gentlewoman,<br>It is her husband that will not be found.                          |
| <i>Iust</i>     | Well all is one, for man and wife are one   |

(D2r)

The aged and myopic Justice Reason mistakes Mistress Arthur for her prodigal husband in this scene. In fact there are many instances in these plays in which patient wives use language or are described in terms which would be more suitably used by or applied to their prodigal husbands. Mistress Arthur, having already been mistaken for her prodigal husband, fends off the advances of the young Anselm, who professes his love for her:

Tempt no more diuel, thy deformitie  
Hath chaung'd it selfe into an angels shape,  
But yet *I* know thee by thy course of speech:  
Thou gets an apple to betray poore *Eue*,  
Whose outside beares a show of pleasant fruite,  
But the vilde branch on which this apple grew,  
Was that which drew poore *Eue* from Paradice.  
Thy Syrens song could make me drowne my selfe,  
But *I* am tyed vnto the mast of truth.

(E4r)

The imagery Mistress Arthur here employs is somewhat confused in terms of its gender positioning. Using the most well known narrative of female fallibility, she imagines herself as Eve, tempted by Anselm as the serpent, in the Garden of Eden. However, she has no intention of falling as Eve fell, for she is ‘tyed unto the mast of truth’, and in the last lines of this passage presents herself as a *male* classical hero tempted by Anselm’s seduction, which she presents as the feminised siren’s song. As I have suggested, Patricia Parker discusses the temptations posed by classical female characters in epic narratives such as the Odyssey – Calypso, Circe – as temptations defined by delay (Parker, *Literary*, 12). Mistress Arthur, it seems, reverses this feminisation of delay by positioning *herself* as the male hero of classical epic who denies that delay and who, unlike Eve and unlike her prodigal husband, is able to resist temptation. Clarke claims Mistress Arthur is ‘disappointing as a domestic heroine because her submissiveness does not consciously further the action and she arouses no particular interest or sympathy on the part of the audience except as the pathetic victim of circumstance’ (Clarke, 259). As this extract from the play suggests, however, this definition of Mistress Arthur does not account for the agency she achieves through her manipulation of the gendered identities of delay.

Luce, the patient wife of *The London prodigall*, is similarly presented in a context which suggests prodigality. Her husband, arrested on his wedding day, bemoans his destitute state: ‘when money, means and friends doe growe so small, | Then farewell life, and ther’s an end of all’ (Fv). Luce, having forsaken her family in support of her prodigal husband, is left in a very similar position:

Alas my friend, I know not what to do,  
My father and my friends, they haue despised me:  
And I am wretched maid, thus cast away,  
Knowes neither where to goe, nor what to say.

(E3r)

She suffers the same fate as her prodigal husband, a fate which, paradoxically, her role as patient wife (the prodigal's antithesis) prescribes for her. This merging of the identities of prodigal husband and patient wife is also apparent in *The faire maide of Bristow*.

Annabelle, in a desperate attempt to save her husband from the executioner's block, disguises herself as one of his male friends in order to vouch for him during his trial, thus satisfying the conditions set by the King for a stay of execution. On seeing his wife enter in disguise as his 'friend' and not knowing her plan, her husband challenges her thus:

Tell me but what thou art, rash yongman,  
that dares enter into this place before me:  
humanity doth teach thee though shouldst  
Giue place unto thine elders, in all asaies,  
how rude then and unmannerly art thou,  
To forget this common courtesie,  
that parents teach their children euery hour.

(E4v-Fr)

As a 'rash yongman' who fails to respect his elders, Annabelle is the typical prodigal who negates delay and refuses the guidance of aged authority. Ironically, it is of course these very faults the husband she is trying to save is guilty of.

Annabelle's prodigality is necessarily short-lived. Female prodigals cannot be forgiven for the kind of sexual action which is an inherent element of riotous living. Therefore there are no perpetual 'prodigal daughters' or 'prodigal wives' because prodigality for women ultimately defines sexual subversion: the female prodigal is a whore. Patient wives can only 'turn prodigal' for the time it takes them to rescue their husbands and therefore reassert male dominance within their own marriages. The jilted Claire of *The miseries of inforct mariage* presents a different kind of short-lived masculine, prodigal challenge to delay through her suicide; the ultimate action which creates the ultimate passive wife. She receives a letter from Scarborough, informing her that he has betrayed the oath he made to her by wedding another. This betrayal strips her of her identity:

He was contracted mine, yet he vniust  
 Hath married to another: whats my estate then?  
 A wretched maid [. . .]  
 And was I then created for a Whore? A whore,  
 Bad name, bad act, Bad man makes me a scorn:  
 Then liue a Strumpet? Better be vnborne [. . .]  
 He writes here to forgiue him, he is married:  
 False Gentleman: I do forgiue thee with my hart,  
 Yet will I send an answere to thy letter,  
 And in so short words thou shalt weep to read them,  
 And hears my agent ready: *Forgiue me, I am dead.*

(C4v-Dr)

The similarly abandoned Marianna of *Measure for Measure* wallows in the ‘continuance of her first affection’, patiently awaiting an opportunity such as is presented by Isabella’s predicament, which enables her to confirm her marriage to Angelo and make a something of the ‘nothing’ which is her status as I suggested earlier, as ‘neither maid, widow, nor wife’ (3.1.242, 5.1.176). Claire, however, refuses the identity of the permanently delayed, dismayed and jilted betrothed. She takes action in taking her own life, a denial of the delay of human existence which is distinctly prodigal in its self-indulgence and for which she cannot be forgiven.

Earlier in the chapter, I illustrated how Chartley, the prodigal husband of *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*, through his negation of delay (his perpetual pursuit of sexual and economic satisfaction) ironically failed to consummate the unions he made, thus rendering both Luce and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Luce permanently ‘delayed’. Claire, as we have seen, is also stripped of a stable subject position in *The miseries of inforct mariage*, and Katherine, Scarborough’s second wife, expresses similar feelings of disempowerment: ‘Tho married, I am reputed not a wife, | Neglected of my husband, scornd, despaired’ (D3r). I suggest that in the absence of any viable female identity as a result of the delay of marital sexual consummation, these patient wives are forced to adopt identities which are considered more appropriate for men than for women, mirroring the prodigality of their husbands.

In *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*, Luce takes advantage of her position as a wife who remains a maid. As her husband is empowered through his anomalous identity as a prodigal husband, so Luce is empowered by her anomalous position as a virgin wife. She becomes a revenger, as her command to her father to have patience, as she plots Chartley's downfall, suggests: 'Nay patience sir, leaue your revenge to mee' (H4r). When Sencer proposes marriage to Gratiana, she has no power to give him an answer herself. Her only response is to tell him that he 'had best ask [her] Father what [she] should say' (C3v). Luce, in comparison, tells her father directly that:

[ . . . ] I have a project in my brain begot  
To make his own mouth witness to the world  
My innocence, and his incontinence.  
Leave it to me. I'll clear myself of blame;  
Though I the wrong, yet he shall reap the shame.

(4.2.140-4)

She is in control of her future and plots for her advancement, in the same way that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Luce is in control of hers. 2<sup>nd</sup> Luce leaves the country and comes to London in disguise in order to reclaim the prodigal husband that deserted her. Like Helena in *All's Well*, these two jilted brides manipulate the delay of their marital consummations and the resulting ambiguity of their prescribed female roles in order to take action against their prodigal husbands. This suggestion of female authorised action, however, is only one possible configuration of the intersecting axes of time and gender as they are presented in these prodigal plays. As I have explored in this section, the patient wives of prodigal husbands are both celebrated and denigrated for their patience, and presented as both authorised and subversive – because prodigal – in the actions they take to convert their wayward spouses.



## Conclusion

The hierarchies of both gender and age are revealed as operating on a temporal axis through the character of the prodigal on the early modern stage. The prodigal son is defined by his subversive action. As I have argued, that action is also a subversive *delay* of authorised social maturation. However, ultimately, the delay of prodigality is legitimised as the necessary process of maturation, rather than a denial of maturation, through the prodigal's conversion and his reassimilation into the patriarchal order. Furthermore, I have suggested that by enforcing prodigal identities and by prolonging the period of prodigality by delaying the moment of conversion, the older generation preserve patriarchal dominance and control the threat to social order posed by the riotous young. Enforcing prodigality as an identity of delay works to feminise young men who, like the virgin and the whore, are presented as subversively delaying mature male action. I have also suggested that when the patient wives of these plays take action to convert their prodigal husbands, they are presented as subversive prodigals themselves. Ultimately, however, my analysis of prodigality has revealed that through the multiple configurations of the binary oppositions between action and delay, male and female, old and young which are manifest in the figure of the prodigal, these plays work to destabilise, at the same time as they assert, the patriarchal dominance of both fathers over sons and husbands over wives.

## Chapter 4

### **‘A kind of pleasure follows’: the actions and delays of revenge<sup>1</sup>**

In the domestic comedies of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods, I have identified a variety of dramatic identities which are sites for the intersection of the binary oppositions of gender (male / female) and of time (action / delay). I have suggested that predominantly, patience advocates a specifically female form of delay and prodigality condemns a particularly masculine type of action. However, a contrasting manifestation of the axes of gender and time is revealed in these plays and is often evoked as a tool for the perpetuation of the patriarchal disempowerment of women: the alignment of masculinity with authorised action and femininity with subversive delay. As has become clear, however, this alignment is not exhaustive, because, as my exploration of patience and prodigality has suggested, in a society circumscribed by religious delay – the passive acceptance of the perpetual deferral of the second coming – the validation of authorised male action over subversive female delay becomes problematic. As I have also explored, it is not just a Christian temporal frame which challenges the binary opposition of male, authorised action and female, subversive delay. The concepts of patience and prodigality *themselves* are simultaneously defined by action and by delay and therefore pose a fundamental challenge to the binary opposition of those two temporal positions and to the gendered identities they are variously associated with.

In this chapter, I move on from my consideration of these binaries in domestic comedy in order to explore another dramatic genre: revenge tragedy. I suggest revenge tragedy draws on the complicated gendered temporalities of prodigality and patience, and

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *On rhetoric: a theory of civic discourse*, trans. by George A. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 116.

that the concept of revenge itself is embedded within a Christian temporal framework that condemns action and promotes passive endurance. I focus on seven late Elizabethan / early Jacobean plays – *The Spanish Tragedy* (1585-1587), *Titus Andronicus* (1594), *Antonio's Revenge* (1600-1601), *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1605-1606), *The Atheist's Tragedy; Or, The Honest Man's Revenge* (1607-1611), *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-1614) and *The Changeling* (1622) – in order to explore the ways in which the complex temporality of revenge works to define the gendered identities of the characters in these plays. From the revenging heroes at the end of the sixteenth century, to the hideously caricatured revenging villains of the Jacobean stage, and from the patient virgin as victim to the revenging whore, these plays present the multiple ways through which gender is temporally constructed through a negotiation of the binary opposition between action and delay on the early modern stage.

Before I begin my analysis of revenge tragedy on the early modern stage, in section one of this chapter I consider revenge as a concept dependent on the same dual temporality – both acting and delaying, waiting and not waiting – which defines patience and prodigality. In section two, I explore the Christian condemnation of revenge as a subversive action which challenges the authority of the delay of patient forbearance, both in these plays and in the religious conduct literature of the period. In section three, I examine how characters in these plays – both male and female – who refuse to wait for God's retributive justice and choose to take revenge in the moment are presented as socially subversive. However, despite the Christian condemnation of revenge which is apparent in these plays, I go on to suggest in sections four and five that the binary opposition of male authorised action and female subversive delay which I have argued was one of the most commonly employed intersections of the axes of time and gender in domestic comedies, remains apparent. In section four I consider how male revengers are presented as authorised by

revengeful actions which confirm their masculinity. Furthermore, I suggest that male revengers are also presented as feminised by their strategies of delay. In section five I explore how female revengers are aligned with subversive delay in these plays despite the active nature of their revenge. In revenge tragedies, I suggest delay is used to define both ineffectual femininity and sadistic female cruelty. In the last section of the chapter, I look at how, in line with both Christian temporality which values patience and endurance over action and the patriarchal temporal binary which celebrates action over delay, male revengers are presented as actually confirming their masculinity and authority by *delaying* revenge, and female revengers are presented as subversive through actions which, rather than masculinising them, actually accentuate their 'femininity'. This strategy, I suggest, works to uphold patriarchal authority, yet at the same time advocates a Christian temporality of patience and forbearance by aligning the authority of men with delay and the subversion of women with action.



at once told Christians to aspire to direct communication with God, and told them to despair of ever knowing anything about Him; told them to focus obsessively on their prospects for eternal salvation, and to recognize that those prospects were beyond their power to control or even comprehend.<sup>2</sup>

The tenets of Reformation theology tore the faithful between delay and action; between patient endurance and constructive endeavour. Montaigne's essay *On habit* deals with the question of whether to delay or not to delay, of whether to take action through revenge or passively endure adversity. He states that 'a gentleman who puts up with an insult is, by the laws of arms, stripped of his rank and nobility: one who avenges it incurs capital punishment'.<sup>3</sup> This double bind suggests men should both act and not act. In Hull's sermon and Montaigne's essay, as in these plays, waiting with patience is necessary, even desirable, yet also painful and regrettable. Therefore action in the moment, when defined in opposition to delay, becomes similarly conflicted, as both forbidden and commendable. Furthermore, these 'now' moments are themselves predicated on delay. The revenger, whether presented as acting righteously or villainously, must always wait as well as act. Revenge is dependent on two separate moments of action: the 'then' of the moment of injury and the 'now' of the moment of retaliation. However, both these instants of action are held in relation to each other by the time between them. It is this temporal lapse which defines the concept of revenge as much as its enactment in the moment does, whether that lapse is infinitesimal, or prolonged. Revenge is simultaneously an act of patience and of impatience; waiting for the right moment and seizing opportunity are opposite temporal positions which co-exist through the temporal experience of the revenger. Thus, the concept

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<sup>2</sup> Robert N. Watson, 'Tragedies of Revenge and Ambition', in *The Cambridge companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. by Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; repr. 2006), pp. 160-181 (p. 164).

<sup>3</sup> Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, ed. by M. A. Screech (London: Penguin, 1987; repr. 2003), p. 132-3.

of revenge, in the terms of this thesis, is simultaneously defined both by delay and by action.

Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* suggests that '[a] kind of pleasure follows from this [rage] and also because people dwell in their minds on retaliating' (Aristotle, 116). This pleasure, it seems, is conditional both on the achievement of revenge and on its anticipation, on the hope which separates the moment of the crime from the moment of retribution. This double temporality which necessitates both waiting and not waiting is also present in Montaigne's consideration of anger. In his essay *On Anger*, he suggests it is imperative not to act in the heat of the moment, but to allow time to pass before one redresses the imbalance caused by the initial slight. He states that '[w]hile our pulse is beating and we can feel the emotion, let us put off the encounter' (Montaigne, 810). He counsels delaying the moment of redress, rather than forgoing that moment entirely, not for pleasure, as Aristotle does, but in order to control rash impulses. For both Aristotle and Montaigne, delay and action combined define revenge.

Anne Burnett explores Aristotle's approach to revenge as it was reflected in Greek tragedy and suggests he avoids conceiving of it as a quest for linear advancement, but rather considers it as a 'return':

Its purpose is not to get rid of someone who is in the way, or to harm someone who succeeds where the avenger has failed, for it is not a mode of advancement or even of self-defence. Its intention is rather to restore the broken outline of self suffered in an unprovoked attack from a member of one's own class or group. It occurs in cases where an instantaneous and open return of blow for blow is impossible [. . .] Such vengeance is the correction of an imbalance rooted in the past, a calculated harm returned for an intentional, shameful injury or insult [. . .] This return is wrought in time, by the disciplined will of an angered individual.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Anne Pippin Burnett, *Revenge in Attic and later tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 2.

Revenge, for Aristotle and for Attic tragedies generally, was driven by a retrospective temporality; a move backward and the restoration of balance. It is a return to a more perfect time. Thomas Rist suggests that, like mourning, revenge is an act of remembrance for things past, a way of returning to the moment when a loved one was lost. Rist argues that in a post-Reformation society which censured excessive displays of mourning, revenge filled the gap left by the Protestant condemnation of specific forms of ritualised remembrance and in fact revenge tragedy itself became ‘a drama of commemoration’.<sup>5</sup> For example, he argues that in *The Spanish Tragedy*, revenge, for Hieronimo, ‘becomes a substitute for Horatio’s tomb, becoming itself commemorative’ (Rist, 36). Thus for Rist, revenge is defined by a retrospective temporality; revenge looks backwards to a moment of injustice and reshapes that moment to restore equilibrium. Francis Bacon also acknowledges the retrospective temporality of revenge by condemning it in his essay *Of Revenge*: ‘That which is past is gone and irrevocable, and wise men have enough to do with things present and to come: therefore they do but trifle with themselves that labour in past matters’.<sup>6</sup>

As Janet Clare suggests, ‘[f]or the protagonists of revenge plays the act of revenge is one of closure, figuratively and literally as, in his public identification with his deed, reparation is made for the past and is sealed with his own death, while the malicious schemer dies taking his secrets to the grave’.<sup>7</sup> However, the temporal linearity of the revenger’s achievement of his goal as described by Clare is destabilised by the fact that, in order to restore balance for the future, the revenger has to return to a moment in the past. Revenge is simultaneously conclusive (pushing forward) and restorative (pulling back). Furthermore, the cycle of revenge continues *ad infinitum*. One act of revenge necessitates

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Rist, *Revenge tragedy and the drama of commemoration in reforming England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p.36.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Essays*, ed. by John Pitcher (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> Janet Clare, *Revenge Tragedies of the Renaissance* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2006), p. 5.



another. As Revenge herself declares in the final scene of *The Spanish Tragedy*, the characters' 'endless tragedy' will continue (4.5.48). The repetitive nature of revenge is picked up on by Burnett. Revenge drives the plots of these plays forward at the same time as it drags them back with ghosts and memories of crimes past committed. Burnett suggests that 'every revenge is an imitation of action with action, and consequently very much like the staging of a play' (Burnett, 3). The repetitive nature of revenge – of matching an 'eye for an eye' and in doing so bringing the past into the future and pulling the future back to a moment from the past – makes its highly metatheatrical. The delay which is the space between one act of violence and another defines the process of revenge itself and also defines the temporal boundaries of the revenge tragedy's 'two-hours' traffic' (*Romeo and Juliet*, Prologue, l. 12). As R. L. Kesler suggests, 'if the ghost's wishes for immediate action were to be fulfilled and revenge immediately enacted, the actions of the play would end in the first act'.<sup>8</sup> Thus delay is as important as action, and revenge on the early modern stage, as I will now explore, is defined by the coexistence of both temporal modes.

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<sup>8</sup> R. L. Kesler, 'Time and Causality in Renaissance Revenge Tragedy', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 59.4 (1990), 474-97 (p. 485).

ii      ‘[P]atience is the honest man’s revenge’: the perpetual deferral of vengeance<sup>9</sup>

Christianity perpetually defers revenge until the Day of Judgement, when God will mete out his retributive justice. Therefore those – both male and female – who choose to ignore God’s declaration that ‘[v]engeance is mine’ by taking vengeful action against their enemies in this life are automatically condemned as religiously subversive (Romans 12.19). In this section of the chapter, I will consider the presentation of revenge on the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean stage as a concept which operates within a Christian framework and which, as a result, and like both patience and prodigality, works on one level to validate delay and demonise action in early modern society.

In act three of Tourneur’s *The Atheist’s Tragedy*, Charlemont is visited by the ghost of his father, Montferrers, who has been murdered by the villainous D’Amville. Whereas the ghostly fathers of *Hamlet* and *Antonio’s Revenge* bid their sons to ‘remember me’, and ‘[r]evenge my blood!’, in contrast, Montferrers requests only that his son ‘[l]et Him revenge my murder and thy wrongs | To whom the justice of revenge belongs’ (*Hamlet*, 1.5.91, *Atheist’s*, 3.2.32-3)<sup>10</sup>. By transferring the duty of vengeance from the abused son to the heavenly Father, the play expresses the same condemnation of blood revenge which is one of the central tenets of Christianity in both the Old and New Testaments. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses recounts God’s proclamation that ‘[t]o me *belongeth* vengeance, and recompense’, stating that ‘the LORD shall judge his people [. . .] he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries’ (Deuteronomy 32.35-6, 43). Similarly, in Paul’s epistle to the Romans, God orders his followers to ‘avenge not yourselves [. . .] for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay’ (Romans 12.19). It is

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<sup>9</sup> Cyril Tourneur, *The Atheist’s Tragedy*, in *Four revenge tragedies*, ed. by Katharine Eisaman Maus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; repr. 2008), 5.2.276.

<sup>10</sup> John Marston, *Antonio’s Revenge*, *The Revels Plays*, ed. by W. Reavley Gair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 3.1.36.

God and God alone who has the power to ‘repay’ on the Day of Judgement and it is the righteous Christian’s duty patiently to await that day. The authorised and authorising delay of Christian patience thus dominates the early modern discourse of revenge.

As Catherine Belsey has argued and as I have explored in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the virtue of patience was associated with providential faith and presented as the orthodox Christian remedy for the frustration which arose as a result of humankind’s inability to fulfil their vengeful desires.<sup>11</sup> Thus the ghost of Montferrers in *The Atheist’s Tragedy* pleads with his son to ‘[a]ttend with patience the success of things | But leave revenge unto the King of kings’ (2.6.22-3). William Westerman’s sermon *A prohibition of reuenge*, which was printed in 1600, makes it clear that it is the Christian’s duty to turn the other cheek, to ‘forget and forgiue, that wee eschew all prouocations, all motions or speaches, that may renew the memorie of wrongs, or nourish the conceipt of inquiries and indignities’.<sup>12</sup> This Christian patience is imperative for Westerman, because revenge belongs to God alone: ‘let mans anger yeeld to Gods wrath; mans impotencie to Gods power; mans partialitie to Gods justice; mans secret conspiracie to the publike Iudgement established by God himselfe’ (Westerman, B2r). He presents his prohibition of revenge as intended ‘to disswade from priuate reuenge, and to draw to a patient abiding of the Lords leisure, and an expectation of his iudgements to be executed’ (Westerman, B3v). As I have suggested in previous chapters, waiting, indefinitely, and with patience, for the Day of Judgement and divine vengeance, shapes the authorised Christian experience and

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Not to act is to leave crime unpunished, murder triumphant or tyranny in unfettered control. The orthodox Christian remedy is patience’. Catherine Belsey, *The subject of tragedy: Identity and difference in Renaissance drama* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 113.

<sup>12</sup> William Westerman, *Two sermons of assise the one intituled A prohibition of reuenge, the other, A sword of maintenance: preached at two seuerall times, before the right worshipfull iudges of assise, and gentlemen assembled in Hertford, for the execution of iustice, and now published by W. Westerman* (London, 1600), B2v.

specifically condemns all forms of human vengeance. As Charlemont's aphorism makes clear at the end of *The Atheist's Tragedy*, 'patience is the honest man's revenge' (5.2.276).

Tourneur's play celebrates this conceptualisation of patience as the tool by which humankind endures the delay of God's retributive justice. In *The Atheist's Tragedy*, a play 'framed by a concept of divine retribution', Charlemont obeys the ghost's command, and rejects the impetus to revenge despite enduring the most extreme abuses (Clare, 76). He manages to turn the other cheek when D'Amville murders his father, steals his inheritance, attempts to rape his betrothed, Castabella, and has him imprisoned on a false charge of adultery. Although Charlemont tells the audience that, of the wrongs he has suffered, 'the lightest is more heavy than | The strongest patience can endure to bear', his powers of patience and endurance ultimately triumph; later in the play he is able to declare to his tormentors that '[m]y passions are | My subjects, and I can command them laugh, | Whilst thou dost tickle 'em to death with misery' (3.1.146-7, 3.3.45-7). As Michael Higgins suggests, Charlemont's 'patience is an expression of his confidence in the immutable decrees of God'; by following his own father's orders not to revenge, Charlemont is putting all his faith in divine justice and the word of the Father.<sup>13</sup> As the final scene of the play suggests, he is right to do so, as 'by the work of Heav'n', D'Amville strikes out his own brains with the axe which he had intended for the execution of Charlemont and Castabella (5.2.297). This is a play which seems to proffer 'theologically orthodox solutions to the problem of reconciling evil and divine justice'.<sup>14</sup> Those solutions are the passivity of patience in the face of adversity and faith in providential punishment.

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<sup>13</sup> Michael H. Higgins, 'The Influence of Calvinistic Thought in Tourneur's *Atheist's Tragedy*', *The Review of English Studies*, 19.75 (1943), 255-62 (p. 259).

<sup>14</sup> G. F. Waller, 'Time, Providence and Tragedy in *The Atheist's Tragedy* and *King Lear*', *English Miscellany: A Symposium of History, Literature and the Arts*, 23 (1972), 55-74 (p. 57).

It is easy to find similar sentiments of patience to those presented in *The Atheist's Tragedy* in other plays of the genre which present revengers who are less passive than Charlemont, revengers who eventually act out vengeance in their own terms. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the first surviving revenge tragedy of the commercial stage and a play commonly credited with popularising revenge as a tragic motif, Hieronimo is 'caught between desire for action and an intolerable, tormenting patience'.<sup>15</sup> This 'tormenting patience' is clearly expressed in 3.13, a scene which Hieronimo begins by declaring '*Vindicta mihi!*', the biblical admonition that '[v]engeance is mine' (Romans 12.19).<sup>16</sup> However, he makes it clear that he speaks not *for* God, but *of* God's divine powers of retribution:

*Vindicta mihi!*  
 Ay, heaven will be revenged of every ill,  
 Nor will they suffer murder unrepaid:  
 Then stay, Hieronimo, attend their will,  
 For mortal men may not appoint their time.

(3.13.1-5)

Ultimately, Hieronimo rejects this pledge to passive Christian inaction, almost as quickly as he expresses it, declaring just a few lines later 'I will revenge his death!' (3.13.20). Yet despite the bloody execution of vengeance which is the result of Hieronimo's rejection of patience, Ronald Broude argues that the fundamental moral position of the *The Spanish Tragedy* is orthodox faith in providential retribution and in patience and endurance as the path to justice, as expressed by Isabella's declaration that '[t]ime is the author of both truth and right | And time will bring this treachery to light', (2.5.58-9, Broude, 131). Although Hieronimo is subversive in his declaration of revenge, Broude argues that he makes a journey 'through disillusionment and despair to patience reinforced by faith', a journey

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<sup>15</sup> John Kerrigan, *Revenge tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 175.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, New Mermaids, ed. by J. R. Mulryne (London: A & C Black, 1970; repr. 1994), 3.13.1.

which means that by the end of the play, he ‘no longer doubts that the heavens will revenge his son’s death’ (Broude, 135, 137). Similarly, Frank Ardolino identifies in the play a ‘sense of destiny achieved in the unfolding of time’ and a ‘providential design’ which makes Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia’s revenge feel as if it is divinely ordained.<sup>17</sup> As Broude suggests, ‘[t]he words *time*, *heaven*, *patience*, and *hope* are central to these characters’ thoughts’; waiting, for both these critics, defines the moral righteousness of the revenging heroes in *The Spanish Tragedy* (Broude, 133).

Both male and female revengers are conscious of the importance of accepting the delayed nature of God’s retributive justice in these plays, and this awareness is evident in the frequency with which characters bid each other to observe patience. Bel-Imperia declares ‘I must constrain myself | To patience, and apply me to the time, | Till heaven, as I have hoped shall set me free’ (3.9.12-14). Tamora, who pleads with Titus for the life of her son, is told to ‘[p]atient yourself, madam’, and Titus similarly addresses Saturninus with ‘[p]atience, Prince Saturninus’.<sup>18</sup> Later in the play, Lavinia, distraught at her father’s grief, is counselled by her uncle Marcus to have ‘[p]atience, dear niece’ (3.1.138). Alberto and Mellida both bid Antonio ‘[b]e patient’ in *Antonio’s Revenge*, De Flores counsels the frustrated Beatrice-Joanna to ‘[l]et beauty settle but in patience’ when she demands to know his message in *The Changeling* and Antonio encourages the persecuted Duchess to ‘[m]ake patience a noble fortitude’ in *The Duchess of Malfi* (*Antonio’s*, 1.5.34, 2.3.113 *Malfi*, 3.5.73).<sup>19</sup> The profusion of references to patience and forbearance in these plays suggest an awareness of the imperative to wait for God’s revenge to be meted out on the

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<sup>17</sup> Frank Ardolino, *Apocalypse and Armada in Kyd’s Spanish tragedy* (Kirkville: Sixteenth century essays and studies, 1995), p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Most Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Stanley Wells, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett and William Montgomery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; repr. 1999), 1.1.121, 203.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*, ed. by Douglas Bruster, in *Thomas Middleton: the collected works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.1.64.

Day of Judgement; it is God and God alone who will bring about the end of the delay which defines humankind's obedient patience. Although the Day of Judgement is perpetually deferred, it is the Christian's duty to have faith in the realisation of that day as part of God's teleological promise. The return of the messiah may be indefinitely delayed, but it *will* eventually happen, and the duty of patience is the tool by which humankind must prepare their souls. Antonio makes this sentiment clear in *The Duchess of Malfi*, when, as I have suggested in Chapter 2, he advises the Duchess that '[m]an, like to cassia, is proved best, being bruised' (3.5.75). The perfume of the cassia plant, like the soul of man, becomes sweeter the more it is chafed.<sup>20</sup> As I shall now go on to illustrate, the revenger who refuses to wait, who seizes revenge in the present moment, is automatically condemned in temporal and religious terms as impatient, intemperate and ungodly.

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<sup>20</sup> This is similar to the use of camomile and the weighted palm to represent patient suffering, as explored in Chapter 2.

### iii      ‘Delays! – Throttle her’: the prodigal intemperance of revenge<sup>21</sup>

If the good Christian patiently waits, trusting in God’s providence and embracing the perpetual deferral of the Day of Judgment, then in Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy the impetus to act in the moment, to ‘[s]eize on revenge, grasp the stern-bended front | Of frowning vengeance with unpeised clutch’, is necessarily figured as subversive for both male and female revengers (*Antonio’s*, 3.1.45-6). I argue that, in these plays, in line with a Christian condemnation of revengeful action, moments of villainous corruption and violence – perpetrated by both men and women – are synonymous with haste, impatience and intemperate rashness. Subversion is presented in temporal terms. For example, in *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron counsels Demetrius and Chiron that ‘[a] speedier course than ling’ring languishment | Must we pursue’ in order to orchestrate their planned rape of Lavinia (2.1.111-2). Ultimately, however, it is Demetrius and Chiron who are positioned as delaying Tamora, the personification of Revenge herself, who has to be restrained from murdering Lavinia in the instant. ‘Give me the poniard’, she demands of Demetrius, before he convinces her to delay Lavinia’s death: ‘Stay, madam, here is more belongs to her. | First thresh the corn, then after burn the straw’ (2.3.120, 122-3).<sup>22</sup> I suggest this glimpse of Tamora’s natural propensity for hasty action suggests to the audience that she is the real malevolent influence at work in the play.

Other moments of foreboding haste abound in these plays. The villainous De Flores declares that he will ‘take a speedy course’ before severing the finger of Alonzo in *The Changeling* (3.2.25). In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Bosola exclaims ‘I’ll not waste longer time’ before stabbing the Cardinal (5.5.44). In the killing frenzy which ends the Duchess’ life

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<sup>21</sup> Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, 4.2.250.

<sup>22</sup> The cruelty of this deferral challenges my suggestion that in these plays delay is presented as authorised Christian patience. More on this in section five.



along with that of her servant, Cariola, he silences the latter's pleas for mercy by exclaiming 'Delays! – Throttle her' (4.2.250). These characters are presented as acting with unconsidered haste in moments of horrific violence which define them as ungodly villains.

The instant of opportunity, of *occasio*, becomes a negative moment of destruction because of the frantic and somewhat deranged urgency of villains such as Piero in *Antonio's Revenge*, who declares, on strangling his henchman, Strotzo, '[d]ie, with thy death's entreats even in thy jaws! | Now, now, now, now. [*Aside*] Now my plot begins to work' (4.3.67-8). Antonio, as revenger, is driven to similarly grisly, if more poetic exclamations of immediate action when he stabs Piero's young son, Julio:

Now barks the wolf against the full-cheeked moon,  
Now lions' half-crammed entrails roar for food,  
Now croaks the toad and night-crows screech aloud,  
Fluttering 'bout casements of departing souls;  
Now gapes the graves, and through their yawns let loose  
Imprisoned spirits to revisit the earth.  
And now swart night, to swell thy hour out,  
Behold I spurt warm blood in thy black eyes.

(3.3.43-50)

Antonio, encouraged to '[s]eize on revenge' by the ghost of his father, is positioned as something of a prodigal son because of his rash action (3.1.45). He is described as 'a poor, poor orphan; a weak, weak child', who acts with intemperance and rushes into revenge in the moment by killing an innocent and defenceless boy (4.4.14). However, the period of Antonio's prodigal action is not *forgiven* by this prodigal's father, but encouraged and motivated by him. The ghost of Andrugio counsels Antonio in his rash, revengeful undertakings, urging on his violence as he urges on the dawn:

And now, ye sooty coursers of the night,  
Hurry your chariot into hell's black womb  
Darkness, make flight; graves, eat your dead again;  
Let's repossess our shrouds. Why lags delay?  
Mount, sparkling brightness, give the world his day.

(3.5.31-5)

Throughout the play, Antonio responds to his father's encouragement to act, spurning the stoic patience of the 'doting' Pandulpho, father of the murdered Feliche, as the 'foamy bubbling of a fleamy brain' (2.2.70, 2.3.54). As R. A. Foakes suggests, despite his use of Senecan rhetoric, Antonio 'rejects Seneca's preaching of patience in *De Providentia*, preferring to be "fried with impatience"'.<sup>23</sup>

The instant of revenge does not conquer the duration of patient endurance until the final act of many of these plays, but the ethos of moment over duration is evidenced in practically every scene and shapes the moral and temporal worlds these characters inhabit. The instant is particularly important in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, a play which is strikingly conscious of its own relationship to the genre it parodies, particularly in its presentation of villainous, hasty action over Christian, passive endurance. Whilst describing Vindice's suitability for the role of Lussurioso's pander, Hippolito declares that

[t]his our age swims with him, and if Time  
Had so much hair, I should take him for Time,  
He is so near kin to this present minute.<sup>24</sup>

Vindice is of the moment, a self-described 'man o' th' time', he is steeped in the 'now' of revengeful action, cramming nine years' vengeance into '[t]his night, this hour, | This minute, now-' (1.1.94, 2.2.157-8). '[H]urry, hurry, hurry!', Vindice declares, 'apace, apace, apace, apace' (2.1.200, 2.2.140). The haste of his actions mark him as a villainous revenger, denying the enduring delay of patience and seizing the moment of vengeance himself.

Female revengers like Tamora as suggested also deny the propriety of Christian delay in order to seize revenge in the moment. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Bel-Imperia, the forerunner of many Jacobean female revengers, is introduced to the audience with the line: 'Signior Horatio, this is the place and the hour' (1.4.1). Bel-Imperia's focus when she is

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<sup>23</sup> R. A. Foakes, 'John Marston's Fantastical Plays: *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*', *Philological Quarterly*, 41.1 (1962), 229-39 (p. 238).

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Middleton, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, ed. by MacDonald P. Jackson, in *Thomas Middleton: the collected works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.3.23-5.

first presented to the audience is on the moment, a moment which forces the audience to associate her revenge with her sexual identity. With these words, Bel-Imperia begins her seduction of Horatio, which is part of her plan to revenge the death of Andrea. Whereas Bel-Imperia's subversive revenge is framed by her sexuality, some thirty-five years after the first performance of *The Spanish Tragedy*, the subversive sexuality of *The Changeling's* Beatrice-Joanna is framed by revenge. Beatrice-Joanna positions her marriage to Alonzo as a cruel tyranny upon which she must be revenged. 'Vengeance strike the news!', she declares, when she is told that Alonzo is newly landed in Alicant (2.1.71). Once it becomes clear to her that De Flores will not be satisfied with a monetary reward for carrying out the murder of her betrothed, she expresses her regret that '[v]engeance begins; | Murder, I see, is followed by more sins' (3.4.166-7). This vengeance against Alonzo is primarily performed through her sexual union with Alsemero, and like Bel-Imperia, Beatrice-Joanna orchestrates the moment to achieve that revenge, a moment which expresses a '[f]itness of time and place' (2.1.4). For revenging women, the subversive action of their revenge in the moment is associated with the subversive actions of their sexuality. Furthermore, successful revenge in these plays is presented as being dependent on the revenger's ability to act at precisely the right time: these revengers, both male and female, are presented as being masters of the moment.

As I suggested in Chapter 1, Hamlet also wishes for the speedy progress of time, bidding the Ghost

[h]aste me to know't that I with wings as swift  
As meditation or the thoughts of love  
May sweep to my revenge

(1.5.29-31)

Hamlet's revenge, however, does not occur until the very end of the play, as is conventionally the case in revenge tragedy which, as R. L. Kesler, suggests

must delay those actions that would complete it (the revenge, the death of the revenger) until the fifth act, since to present them immediately would be to end the play. The delay thus constructs a space between the beginning and the closing, through which the play exists, but exists primarily *as a space*.

(Kesler, 489)

Like the revelation which reinstates the patient wife and the repentance which similarly reinstates the prodigal, the act of revenge which condemns the revenger cannot take place until the final act of the play. As Catherine Belsey suggests '[w]hatever the requirements of Christian patience, the imperatives of fiction demand that heaven delays the execution of justice, and in the interim crime continues' (Belsey, 114). If it occurs any sooner, the delay that defines revenge tragedy is threatened. The character of Hoffman in Henry Chettle's play *The tragedy of Hoffman* (1602), however, poses a challenge to this generic formula. Hoffman is a forerunner of the kind of Machiavellian villain with whom we are presented in Jacobean revenge tragedy. Like most revengers, Hoffman conventionally blesses '[t]he hower, the place, the time', and bids events to move on with speed: 'with a hart as aire, swift as thought', he tells us he will be revenged for his father in his opening monologue.<sup>25</sup> However, whereas Hamlet and other revengers languish in the 'space' of a five act delay, Hoffman is granted his wish for speed; he commits a brutal act of revengeful murder within the first three hundred lines of act one. I will consider the moral value of the revenger's conventional delay later in the chapter, but what I want to make clear at this point is that *all* revengers who refuse to wait for God to mete out justice on the Day of Judgement, whether that refusal manifests as revengeful murder in act one or act five, are ultimately punished for their disobedience. One of the key conventions of revenge tragedy is 'that the revenger himself must die at the end of the play'.<sup>26</sup> Thus, in line with Christian conduct literature

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<sup>25</sup> Henry Chettle, *The tragedy of Hoffman or A reuenge for a father As it hath bin diuers times acted with great applause, at the Phenix in Druery-lane* (London, 1631), B3r, Br.

<sup>26</sup> Phoebe S. Spinrad, 'The Sacralization of Revenge in *Antonio's Revenge*', *Comparative Drama*, 39.2 (2005), 169-85 (p. 169).

which demands the passive acceptance of the delay of retribution, these plays make it clear that the moment revengers choose for their revenge is not ordained by heaven, but is in fact the moment in which they are condemned to hell. As R. L. Kesler suggests, 'to act at all becomes to commit suicide' in these plays (Kesler, 483).

As I shall go on to explore, the denial of the Christian delay of forbearance which is defined by the action of *male* revenge is to some degree authorised in these plays as confirming a masculine identity, if not a Christian one. However, the action of taking revenge can only ever make *women* subversive, because as I have suggested throughout this thesis, women are legitimised in patriarchal society through the imposed delays of passive female virtue: chastity, patience, silence and obedience. By revenging, both men and women challenge the Christian condemnation of human action by denying delay, yet in these plays, men and women are judged differently for their revengeful actions.

#### iv      **The male revenger: action legitimised**

As I have suggested, the action of the revenger is condemned as impious and disobedient in line with the Christian tenets of patience and forbearance and with the perpetual delay of God's retributive justice. However, because, as I have been arguing throughout this thesis, the patriarchal rhetoric of early modern conduct literature often works to define gender in terms of masculine authorised action and female subversive delay, these plays also legitimise the action of the *male* revenger. Even though the action of revenge condemns him as subversive within a Christian frame of necessary delay, I suggest that in these plays revenge also works to confirm masculine authority and subsequently, the denial of that revenge, its delay, is presented as feminising and therefore as subversive.

There is, of course, an exception to the rule that all revengers are condemned to hell and suffer death in the final acts of revenge tragedies, and that exception is *Antonio's Revenge*. In many ways, Antonio is a typical revenger. He uses similar rhetoric to express the same sentiments that are voiced by Hoffman and Vindice. For example, he rejoices in the moment of revenge as somehow divinely ordained: 'Time, place and blood, | How fit you close together!' (3.3.13-4). However, following the realisation of his murderous quest – which includes the cold-blooded slaughter of a child – Antonio is destined not for the burning fires of hell, but for the 'calm sequestered life' of religious seclusion, where '[i]n holy verge of some religious order', he will be allowed to live out the remainder of his life (5.6.44, 35). The likes of Hoffman and Vindice meet far more brutal ends: Hoffman is tortured with a burning crown and Vindice is led off stage to a 'speedy execution' (5.3.102). Whereas both Hoffman and Vindice attempt to justify their actions as divinely ordained by claiming they occur in 'the sweetest occasion, the fittest hour', Antonio's revengeful killings, including the murder of an innocent child, are *literally* divinely

ordained, as his religious seclusion suggests (*Revenger's*, 5.1.16). The ghost of Andrugio in the play tells us that '[n]ow down looks providence | T'attend the last act of my son's revenge', and celebrates the fact that, through Antonio's actions, '[h]eaven's just; for I shall see | The scourge of murder and impiety' (5.1.10, 24-5). Antonio becomes a hero rather than a villain through the action of revenge and as I will now go on to explore, other male revengers are similarly exonerated despite their denial of Christian patience.

The impatient action of the revenger does not always result in their moral condemnation. It would be too simplistic, of course, to imagine that these plays merely reflected religiously orthodox views on revenge as a subversive action, when, as I have argued throughout this thesis, early modern culture so strongly values the authorising power of action in the moment. Anne Burnett argues that '[o]f course the Christian should wait', however, despite this imperative, 'God's justice could be slow, his earthly representatives corrupt, the machinery of state out of order, so that flagrant wrongs went unpunished' (Burnett, 21). Susan Jacoby similarly suggests that early modern society acknowledged the difficulty of accepting the perpetual deferral of heavenly judgment, asking '[i]f God's retribution was certain, were men and women required to accept indefinite delay if they were the victims of evil?'.<sup>27</sup> It is this question which the revengers of these plays seem to pose again and again, and it is this rejection of delay which can make these plays seem temporally subversive. However, these revengers make it very clear that the path of patience is difficult to follow. We sympathise with these characters and their extreme and seemingly perpetual suffering. Titus declares his pain is 'unspeakable, past patience', despairingly asking '[w]hen will this fearful slumber have an end?' (5.3.125, 3.1.251). Antonio proclaims that '[p]atience is a slave to fools, a chain that's fixed | Only to posts and senseless log-like dolts', and since he has lost his father, his inheritance, his

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<sup>27</sup> Susan Jacoby, *Wild Justice: The Evolution of Revenge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), p.36.

betrothed and his freedom, all to one man, his rejection of patience may well have seemed justifiable to an early modern audience (1.5.36-7). Faced with his ‘Herculean woe’, he asks ‘O what dank, marish spirit | But would be fired with impatience’ (2.3.133, 2.3.55-6). As he suggests, ‘[p]igmy cares | Can shelter under patience’ shield, but giant griefs | Will burst covert’ (2.3.4-6).

Harry Keyishian argues that in early modern society, there would have been some sympathy for those choosing to perform violent acts of revenge. He suggests that

revenge is not conceived as solely the activity of vicious sociopaths [. . .] but as a characteristic human response that can express the best as well as the worst in us. The impulse to revenge derives not only from such destructive feelings as hatred, rage, pride, and vindictiveness, but also from many that are heroic and essential to individual and social existence, like indignation, gratitude, compassion, loyalty.<sup>28</sup>

The contradictory messages about revenge which can be found in the Old and New Testaments suggest that, as Keyishian argues, vengeance was not uniformly considered subversive. Although Christians are told in no uncertain terms that ‘[v]engeance *is* mine’, other passages of the Bible make it equally clear that vengeance is *ours* (Romans 12.19). The book of Exodus tells us to ‘give life for life, | Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot’, and in Numbers we are reassured that ‘[t]he revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him’ (Exodus 21.23-4, Numbers 35.19).

As I have suggested, one of the temporal conventions of revenge tragedy is the revenger’s desire to act in the moment, to seize revenge ‘[n]ow, now, now, now’ (*Antonio*’s, 4.3.68). The majority of the examples of this type of frenzied action in the instant which I identified earlier in the chapter are presented negatively, as a denial of

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<sup>28</sup>Harry Keyishian, *The shapes of revenge: victimisation, vengeance, and vindictiveness in Shakespeare* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press International, 1995), p. 9.



Christian patience. However, this focus on the instant *can* be positioned positively. Ronald Broude suggests that the ability to find the right moment in which to act confirmed an individual's Christian piety. The belief that 'the righteous man was given the gift of recognising and thus being able to take advantage of opportunity' was, he argues, 'an important tenet of Christian doctrine' (Broude, 138). Thus action in the moment *can* be presented as positive within a Christian framework as well as within a patriarchal one, in that it both confirms piety as well as masculine authority.

I suggest that by rejecting strategies of Christian delay in order enact revenge in the moment, male revengers shore up their masculine identities and assert their authority over women in line with the patriarchal binary which posits authorised male action against subversive female delay. In emblem books, *occasio*, the personification of the moment of opportunity, is often figured as a naked woman standing on a wheel and holding a razor blade in her hand. The back of her head is bald and she has a long forelock by which she must be seized [Appendix Figures 4 and 5]. '[T]hat bald madam, Opportunity', as Vindice describes her, is sexualised as a woman both in emblematic form and in the text of *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1.1.55). Thus seizing the moment is also seizing the woman; temporal dominance and sexual dominance are aligned through the figure of *occasio* in the early modern period. This is made clear through Vindice's description of *occasio*. He tells us that if he meets her, he'll 'hold her by the foretop fast enough, | Or like the French mole heave up hair and all' (1.1.100-1). R. A. Foakes suggests that the 'French mole' is a reference to syphilis, the 'French disease' which could make its sufferer lose their hair.<sup>29</sup> Thus *occasio* is presented by Vindice as a promiscuous woman to be physically dominated and sexually possessed. Like the 'strumpet' fortune whom Hamlet describes, the distractions and delays

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Middleton and Cyril Tourneur, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Revels Student Editions, ed. by R. A. Foakes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 1.1.101n.

posited by the sexuality of the promiscuous *occasio* must be seized and controlled by man in the moment (2.2.231). Thus temporal and sexual dominance are aligned in revenge tragedy.

Through the personification of *occasio* as a woman, masculinity is confirmed through action over female delay. Anne Burnett positions revenge in the early modern period as a specifically masculine act; it is a male duty which excludes female participation. She argues that '[r]evenge was the deed of a masculine principle because women were held to have neither honor nor strength' (Burnett, 21, n50). Burnett's argument hinges on the notion that although revenge was religiously condemned, it was, as Fredson Bowers suggests, 'still very much alive' in the early modern period and expressive of a masculine chivalric code of honour.<sup>30</sup> Male characters assert their masculine worth (if not necessarily their moral worth) by rejecting periods of delay as they are represented by delaying and elusive women. They both seize the moment and seize the woman.

*The Changeling* offers an extreme example of this masculine disregard for delay when De Flores denies the structural hiatus of the act break to hide a '*naked rapier*' on the stage (3.1.0.2). As Gary Taylor suggests, by the latter part of James's reign, act breaks were commonly observed in performance, so this flagrant denial of the pause in which 'all the characters collectively stop acting and speaking, and the play itself hesitates', draws attention to De Flores' authority, which is soon to be confirmed through his sexual domination of Beatrice-Joanna.<sup>31</sup> Although she resists his advances, Beatrice-Joanna is the opportunity De Flores, as a gentleman fallen out of favour with the court, is driven to possess, and as such he figures her protestations as feminine delays. When his kisses are

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<sup>30</sup> Fredson Thayer Bowers, *Elizabethan revenge tragedy 1587-1642* (Gloucester, MA: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Gary Taylor, 'The Structure of Performance: Act-Intervals in the London Theatres, 1576-1642', in *Shakespeare reshaped, 1606-1623*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 1-50 (p. 3).

denied, he exclaims ‘I will not stand so long to beg ’em shortly’ and his intention to possess her in the moment is clarified with the following stichomythic exchange:

|                  |                   |               |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <i>Beatrice</i>  | I dare not.       |               |
| <i>De Flores</i> | Quickly!          |               |
| <i>Beatrice</i>  | O, I never shall! | (3.4.96, 104) |

The irony of this line is clear when we consider that, previously in the play, Beatrice-Joanna had called De Flores ‘[a] dallying, trifling torment!’ (2.1.65). De Flores denies his identity as feminised delayer, an identity which Beatrice-Joanna attempts to force on him, and seizes the moment along with Beatrice-Joanna herself to ‘take a speedy course’ and assert his masculinity through his action in opposition to her delay (3.2.25).

Thus this late Jacobean revenge play reflects and constructs the binary which confirms the masculinity of action in the moment against the ongoing delay presented by woman as fleeting and elusive *occasio*. In early modern society, masculinity is often defined by action rather than delay and therefore in revenge tragedies this temporal definition of masculinity persists, despite Christianity’s condemnation of mankind’s action as impious and disobedient. These characters’ inability to endure suffering with patience defines their religious subversion, but also, at an even more fundamental level, actually works to positively confirm their masculinity. By aligning the action revengers take with the domination of women as agents of delay through the association of *occasio* with feminine reticence, these plays work to reassert the patriarchal binary which pits authorised male action against subversive female delay.

Although, to some extent, delaying the act of revenge enables the male revenger to express a Christian conscience, that same delay also feminises him. The conventional male revenger of the Jacobean stage is feminised by their mournfulness, their madness and their morbid eloquence. By suggesting that men who delay are feminine, these plays reiterate a

binary opposition between authorised male action and subversive female delay which is foundational to the performance of gendered identities in early modern society.

Mourning as delay is presented as feminine in revenge tragedy: it exists in direct opposition to and as a deferral of revenge as a legitimate and authorising masculine action in the moment. As Charles Frey suggests,

[t]ragic women and tragic men exhibit different subcultures. The women grieve for what is lost *in* this life. The men resolutely seek to live *beyond* this life, to extend (in the manner of Titus or Caesar or Hamlet Senior or Lear or Macbeth) their power beyond the limits of their own lifetimes.<sup>32</sup>

Frey argues that the masculinity of revenge is a strategy for the active legitimisation of identity into the future, which is defined in opposition to a feminine retrograde temporality of grief and mourning for what has past. Those who fail to revenge are described as paralysed and therefore feminised, by their grief. Hieronimo is berated for his ‘incessant tears’, his ‘passions’ and ‘deep laments’ (4.1.3-5). Similarly, Maria chides Antonio who she says does ‘naught but weep, weep’ (2.4.6). As I suggested earlier in the chapter, he rages against patience and inaction, but nonetheless fails to *do* anything until he kills Julio in act three. Meditations of grief similarly paralyse Titus, who fails to realise that ‘[n]ow is a time to storm’ (3.1.262). Hieronimo, Titus and Antonio are all feminised by their propensity for passive mourning. In Jacobean revenge tragedy, the delay of mourning is parodied in its extreme: Vindice spends nine years mourning the death of Castiza, remaining on intimate terms with her decaying corpse.

Madness, or what Carol Thomas Neely describes as early modern ‘distraction’, is, on one level, an active response to the passive inaction of grief.<sup>33</sup> Like revenge, madness is

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<sup>32</sup> Charles H. Frey, ‘Man’s Rage/Woman’s Grief: Engaging with Death in *Titus Andronicus*’, in *Re-visions of Shakespeare: essays in honour of Robert Ornstein*, ed. by Evelyn Gajowski (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 66-88 (p. 73).

<sup>33</sup> Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted subjects: madness and gender in Shakespeare and early modern culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

established in opposition to the delay of excessive mourning; it is a dynamic alternative to the delayed nature of the kind of prolonged performances of grief which are condemned by the reformed Church. As Neely suggests, ““madness” and “distraction” denote excessive and often violent activity and behaviour visible to others’ (Neely, 4). However, I suggest that in revenge tragedy, distraction in fact denotes a passive inaction which prevents revenge from taking place. Infamously ‘distracted’ would-be revengers such as Hieronimo, Titus and Hamlet are presented, on one level at least, as unable to revenge as a result of their mental imbalance. Therefore like the concept of delay itself, at the same time as distraction delineates activity in excess, it is paradoxically also a deferral of action. Rather than being aligned with revenge as an alternative to prolonged and passive grief, in revenge tragedy, madness is aligned with mourning in opposition to revenge and as a delay. Neely describes distraction as a ‘temporary derailing’, an expression not of ‘permanent attributes, but temporary behaviors’ (Neely, 2, 3). Like mourning, madness does not constitute a social identity in reformed society; it is a hiatus, a momentary distraction from the linear progression of the individual toward God or of the revenger toward justice.

As I have suggested through my analysis of *Hamlet* in Chapter 1, verbosity in early modern drama was often positioned as a female strategy for the delay of male action. As James Stone argues, *Hamlet* ‘associates the dilatory circumlocution of “words, words, words” with the unchaste female’.<sup>34</sup> Although ‘[p]rompted to my revenge by heaven and hell’, Hamlet ‘[m]ust like a whore unpack my heart with words | And fall a-cursing like a very drab’ (2.2.519-21). *The Changeling* offers an example of how the use of language is presented in temporal and gendered terms in revenge tragedy. In 1.1, Alsemero declares to Beatrice-Joanna that

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<sup>34</sup> James W. Stone, ‘Androgynous “Union” and the Woman in *Hamlet*’, *Shakespeare Studies*, 23 (1995), 71-99 (p. 73).

[. . .] I have showed you all my skill at once.  
I want more words to express me further,  
And must be forced to repetition:  
I love you dearly.

(1.1.68-71)

Alsemero is delayed in Alicante and as a result is feminised by his love for Beatrice-Joanna. Furthermore, his delay is presented in verbal and temporal terms; he defers the linear trajectory of his sea-journey through the repetition of the words which keep him ashore. However, his repetition as a *lack* of eloquence also confirms his masculinity. Because he finds it difficult to articulate his feelings for her, Beatrice-Joanna finds him more attractive. '[T]his was the man was meant me', she declares once he has confessed his inability to adequately express his emotions and his necessary resort to repetition (1.1.85). Beatrice-Joanna contrasts the verbal abilities of Alsemero and De Flores. His 'dog-face' is ridiculed because of his verbosity; on De Flores' first entrance, Beatrice expresses her annoyance that he 'must stall | A good presence with unnecessary babbling' (2.2.148, 1.1.97-8). As I have already shown, Beatrice-Joanna considers De Flores' loquaciousness to be feminising; he is described as a 'dallying, trifling torment', in direct contrast, I suggest, to the laconically masculine Alsemero (2.1.65).

So, although Alsemero is delayed, he retains his masculinity by resisting the recourse to eloquence which in *The Changeling* feminises men such as De Flores. However, other lovers in revenge tragedy struggle to assert their masculinity when engaged in processes of courtship and seduction. If masculinity is paradoxically expressed through a terseness of expression – a rejection of the delay of eloquence – then when men refuse to engage in a dialogue of romantic seduction in order to protect their masculinity, women must orchestrate courtship themselves, thereby challenging male authority. This becomes particularly apparent when clashes in social status are involved. Antonio takes a passive role in the negotiation of his relationship with the Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi*. She

bemoans that she is ‘forced to woo, because none dare woo us’, and she goes on to orchestrate her own wedding, commanding Antonio in the process to ‘[a]wake, awake, man!’ and listen to her request as ‘a young widow | That claims you for her husband’ (1.1.442, 455, 457-8). ‘*She puts the ring upon his finger*’, ‘*Kisses him*’, and announces their marriage ‘[p]er verba de presenti’ (1.1.415SD, 1.1.464SD, 1.1.479). Similarly, in *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, the Duchess takes control of the seduction of Spurio. In order to be revenged on the Duke, she incites Spurio in his desire for his own vengeance against his father:

Would not this mad e’en patience, make blood rough?  
 Who but an eunuch would not sin, his bed  
 By one false minute disinherited?  
(1.2.164-6)

His reluctance to revenge, she suggests un-genders him completely. In this scene, in which she reveals her plan to unite her own desire for revenge on the Duke with Spurio’s through their sexual congress, she speaks more than twice as many lines as her bastard stepson/lover. When Spurio is reticent in committing to her plan, she laments ‘[c]old still? In vain then must a Duchess woo?’ (1.2.170). Like the Duchess of Malfi, the Duchess of *The Revenger’s Tragedy* takes control through language and, in doing so, feminises the object of her desire.

It seems men in revenge tragedy can be feminised by speaking too much or conversely by speaking too little. This is the kind of temporal double bind to which we are used to seeing women fall victim in the early modern period. To deny the delay of language is to protect masculinity but it is also to take passive role in wooing and in plots of revenge. Like mourning and like madness, language is presented simultaneously as both an action and as a delay which prevents action and which therefore feminises male revengers and male lovers in these plays.

v      **The female revenger: subversive delay**

Eileen Allman suggests that revenge acts as a gender leveler in early modern literature. She argues that '[w]ithin the plays, characters of both sexes maintain their culture's belief in the essential difference between men and women, but they must confront the similarity of their subjection under tyranny' (Allman, 21). The tyrant against whom the revenger acts neutralises gender difference by subordinating both men and women equally. This 'degendering' enables *both* sexes to seize revenge as a positive action against the tyrant's oppressive regime. For Allman, the revenger, whether male or female, wins authority by aligning revengeful action with divine virtues that elevate his or her moral cause against that tyrant. I challenge Allman to suggest that although, as I have illustrated, revenge can be authorised for men in these plays as a confirmation of masculine identity, women's revenge can never be authorised as active. Women in these plays are circumscribed by a delayed temporality which both threatens male authority and also paradoxically devalues strategies of female revenge as both ineffectual and as inordinately cruel.

Through the sexualised figure of *occasio*, I have suggested that enduring periods of female delay are set against precise moments of male action in revenge tragedy. *Occasio* is figured female not because women are commonly conceived as acting in the moment, but because women are the obstacles to male action; their delay must be overpowered in the instant and the opportunity they represent (often figured sexually) must be seized. Female delay in these plays is categorised in two ways. It is either the delay of sexual excess (the delay of the whore who entices men away from their moral quests) or it is the delay of sexual denial (the delay of the virgin who prevents men from achieving the action of sexual consummation and genealogical perpetuation). As I have argued throughout this thesis, women are presented as delaying either because of an innate concupiscence or because of a



socially instilled dedication to chastity. Thus female delay is presented either in order to confirm a character's sexual subversion as desiring woman, or to confirm her value within patriarchal society as a chaste object of male exchange. In revenge tragedy, I suggest we are presented with women who prevent men from revenging by delaying them either with sex or by withholding sex, and who furthermore are incapable of realising vengeance themselves *because* they inhabit identities circumscribed by delay. Whereas the action of revenge confirms masculinity, in these plays, the delay of revenge confirms strategies of subversive femininity.

Woman as sexual enchantress is a common figure throughout the genre of revenge tragedy. For example, Bel-Imperia's seduction of Horatio in the bower is presented in temporal terms. She bids him '[I]et dangers go, thy war will be with me' and in doing so delays his military advancement as an active soldier; she effeminises him as a lover in the timeless pastoral idyll she creates (2.2.32). Beatrice-Joanna similarly delays Alsemero, who puts off his departure for Malta in order to woo her. Jasperino exclaims that his companion's meditative state as petrarchan lover is 'but idleness compared with your haste yesterday' and, when Alsemero protests he is 'all this while a-going', Jasperino remarks '[b]ackwards, I think, sir' (1.1.43-5). As I have suggested, Alsemero protests that he is 'forced to repetition' by his love for Beatrice-Joanna; she has halted, in fact inverted, his linear progress (1.1.70). Sara Eaton describes him entering the play as 'frustrated revenger': he is prevented from revenging the death of his father by Spain's truce with the Netherlands.<sup>35</sup> However, I would argue that it is Beatrice-Joanna herself, rather than any truce, that delays his project of revenge. Tamora similarly distracts Aaron from the revengeful action he plans for his 'day of doom' by bidding him lie with her in the forest,

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<sup>35</sup> Sara Eaton, 'Beatrice-Joanna and the Rhetoric of Love in *The Changeling*', *Theatre Journal*, 36.3 (1984), 371-82 (p. 374).

where they may, 'wreathèd in the other's arms, | Our pastimes done, possess a golden slumber' (2.3.42, 25-6). A 'natural' female concupiscence is presented in these plays as delaying the revengeful action of men with the promise of sex.

In *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Elizabeth Carey presents an alternative view of delay as a *positive* attribute of authoritative femininity. Herod, returned from Rome, awaits a meeting with his beloved Mariam with eager anticipation:

Be patient but a little while, mine eyes,  
Within your compassed limits be contained;  
That object straight shall your desires suffice  
From which you were so long a while restrained.  
How wisely Marian doth the time delay  
Lest sudden joy my sense should suffocate.<sup>36</sup>

In these lines, Herod celebrates rather than condemns Mariam for her strategy of delay.

Unlike the revenge tragedies examined in this chapter, this play by a woman presents a female would-be-revenger (Herod has, after all, murdered her brother and grandfather) who is valued by a man *because* of her delay. This alignment of delay with authorised femininity works in direct contrast to the intersection of the gendered and temporal binaries which are apparent in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean revenge tragedies here examined. Women in these plays are defined as subversive as a result of their delay as both virgins and whores.

Women in these plays subversively delay the authorised action of men not only by offering sex, but by withholding it. The chaste woman of revenge tragedy is frequently removed from the passage of time, whether through sleeping, fainting, imprisonment, silence or madness, and this removal from time is, I suggest, presented as a delay. Perhaps the most important example of the sleeping woman is found in *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Revenge *herself*, must be roused from slumber by Andrea who frantically bids her

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<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam*, in *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. by S. P. Cerasano (London: Routledge, 1996), 4.37-8.

‘[a]wake, Erichtho! Cerberus, awake! | Solicit Pluto, gentle Prosperine [. . .] Revenge, awake! [. . .] Awake, Revenge, or we are woe-begone!’ (3.15.1-2,8,17). In *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, Vindice demands that Revenge be given ‘her’ due, and Revenge is similarly feminised in *The Spanish Tragedy*; Erichtho is the Thessalian sorceress and Prosperine queen of the underworld (*Revenger’s*, 1.1.43). Other chaste revenging women are depicted sleeping. Mellida begins *Antonio’s Revenge* innocently dosing whilst the dead body of Feliche is arranged next to her. Martha is asleep when she is approached by the murderous Hoffman, who delays her death in order to seduce her. Hoffman positions Martha as the agent of his delay, urging her on to sexual congress and warning her that her resistance is ‘death to quicke desire’ and that she must ‘vse no delay’ (Lv).

Like sleep, fainting also acts to abstract these virtuous virgins from the linear progression of the play and of the revenger’s machinations. In *Antonio’s Revenge*, Maria herself loses consciousness on hearing of her husband’s death and Mellida swoons in 4.3 when she is told Antonio has drowned. Imprisonment and madness similarly work to delay and remove these women. Bel-Imperia in *The Spanish Tragedy* and Mellida in *Antonio’s Revenge* both spend several scenes imprisoned and therefore abstracted from the dramatic action, and Isabella in *The Spanish Tragedy* and Lucibella in *Hoffman* both have their sanity questioned. Like physical unconsciousness, mental imbalance disempowers these women. Silence is another key motif of the chaste heroine of revenge tragedy. Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* has silence thrust upon her, whereas Maria in *Antonio’s Revenge* chooses not to speak in the face of her extreme abuse. Although not all these examples of female delay are direct denials of male action or sexual consummation, they do work to frustrate male desires by temporally absenting these unattainable female characters from the dramatic action which shapes the plots of these plays. I suggest these hiatuses are stylised versions of female patience.

Virginal delay is also aligned with the cruel indifference of the petrarchan mistress in *The Spanish Tragedy*. At the beginning of 2.1, Lorenzo coaches Balthazar on the need for patience as spurned lover if he is to satisfy his desire for Bel-Imperia:

My lord, though Bel-imperia seem thus coy,  
Let reason hold you in your wonted joy:  
‘In time the savage bull sustains the yoke,  
In time the haggard hawks will stoop to lure,  
In time small wedges cleave the hardest oak,  
In time the flint is pierced with softest shower’ –  
And she in time will fall from her disdain,  
And rue the sufferance of your friendly pain.

(2.1.1-8)

Bel-Imperia is shaped by Lorenzo as a coy mistress, delaying Balthazar’s sexual satisfaction through the conventions of petrarchan disdain. Her disregard for him is framed in temporal terms. She makes him wait and it is this reticence – her petrarchan delay – which in fact paradoxically defines her value as a virtuous maid. Her father exclaims to the King that ‘she coy it as becomes her kind’ (2.3.3). It is through her delay that she proves her value; the delay of her coyness is perceived as a mark of her chastity and therefore her suitability as an object of exchange between the royal families of Spain and Portugal. She is placed firmly within a linear temporal trajectory by her brother and father, a trajectory which defines her resistance as delay, but which condones that delay as expressive of her chastity and her worth.

Some female characters in Jacobean revenge tragedy consciously manipulate the deferral which defines ‘coy’ virginity in order to realise the actions of their own subversive and sexual desires. Beatrice-Joanna, for example, expresses a desire to ‘reprieve | A maidenhead three days longer’ and postpone her marriage to Alonzo (2.1.115-6). Thus she positions herself as a traditionally timid and delaying virgin, an identity which masks her desire to speed the death of her betrothed. In this way, she delays Alonzo as a virgin in order to delay Alsemero as a whore. Belforest guards against similar deception in *The*

*Atheist's Tragedy* when he demands that Castabella be married '[t]his instant night' in order '[t]o cut off ev'ry opportunity | Procrastination may assist her with', either, it would seem, as reluctant virgin, or sexually deviant (1.4.25-7).

Before her final demise, Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling* is forced to experience the effects of female delay herself as she waits for Diaphanta, the virgin willing to qualify as a 'whore', to consummate her marriage by proxy. As Beatrice paces the stage, waiting for Diaphanta to emerge from her chamber, the passing of time is made painfully apparent: '*A clock strikes one [ . . . ] Strikes two*' and finally, we are told, it '*[s]truck three o'clock*' (5.1.0.1, 5.1.11.1, 5.1.66.1). 'This night hath been so tedious', she exclaims (5.1.64). The delay of female sexuality – as both virgin and whore combined – to which she subjected both Alsemero and Alonzo, is here used against Beatrice-Joanna by Diaphanta, who at some uncertain instant is transformed from virgin to whore in a bed trick which is designed to transform Beatrice-Joanna from whore to virgin.

So, in revenge tragedy, women delay as subversive whores, enticing men away from their honourable duties with sexual action. They also delay as patriarchally legitimate virgins, beguiling men with their charms and yet withholding sexual congress. I argue that male anxiety about identifying female virtue, that is, female chastity, results in part from the fact that virgins and whores are both created as agents of delay and therefore share temporal strategies, as a result suggesting that the distinction between them is arbitrary. Characters like Beatrice-Joanna are, through their deception, both virgins and whores simultaneously. It is because delay defines both female virtue and female vice that anxiety surrounding the identification of one or the other permeates revenge tragedy.

Not only do women delay men in their quests for revenge in these plays as virgins and whores, but their identities of delay also prevent women from effectively revenging themselves. As I have suggested, for Anne Burnett, women are presented in revenge

tragedy as naturally unable to take action and revenge, and this ineffectuality is expressive of patriarchal society's condemnation of women as naturally and subversively inactive, dishonourable and weak. For Burnett, revenge represents masculine authority, and thus women are deemed incapable of enacting vengeance. She admits three exceptions to this generalisation. Bel-Imperia is, she argues, a character who 'tests the limits of female revenge' (Burnett, 21, n50). However, although 'she does in fact stab Balthazar in the end', that action is 'only as a player in Hieronimo's masque, following the plot that he has authored and produced' (Burnett, 21, n50). She similarly acknowledges both Charlotte in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (c. 1610-11) and Evadne in Fletcher's *Maid's Tragedy* (c. 1610-11) as determined would-be revengers, but ultimately discredits them as similarly inept. Evadne in particular is described as 'more as instrument than as true female avenger', despite the fact that she stabs the king (Burnett, 21, n50).

Raymond Rice is even more direct than Anne Burnett in his suggestion that in early modern patriarchal society women were not in a position to enjoy the authority and freedom the action of revenge required. In his analysis of *Much Ado About Nothing*, he argues that 'Beatrice realizes that she cannot enact revenge for the very reason that she is a woman and consequently locked into specific gender roles'.<sup>37</sup> Her dream of eating Claudio's heart in the market place can never be fulfilled. Rice suggests that '[t]he authority of multiple discourses forbids Beatrice to assume the role of revenger, constructing for her a "natural" feminine position of passive objectification and acceptance of the Law, rather than its questioning' (Rice, 299). Her necessary passivity – her delay as a woman – will not correlate with the active demands of revenge: 'The community of revengers is thus a quintessentially active and masculine one from which women are

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<sup>37</sup> Raymond J. Rice, 'Cannibalism and the Act of Revenge in Tudor-Stuart Drama', *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 44.2 (2004), 297-316 (p. 299).

excluded, with any attempt by women to join such a community constructed as an inherently transgressive act' (Rice, 300). For Burnett and Rice, women are abstracted from the discourse of revenge because of its association with the kind of honourable and authorised action which within a patriarchal society, women were deemed incapable of enacting. The action revenging women take in these plays is devalued and revenging women themselves disempowered, through the imposition of a gendered identity of female delay.

The innate delay which defines femininity in these plays, however, does not only position women as ineffectual. Female revenging action is paradoxically defined by delay: women's revenge, I suggest, is presented as particularly cruel by virtue of its delayed, insidious temporality. As I have suggested, the characters of revenge tragedy struggle with a Christian condemnation of vengeance which authorises the kind of delay that for early modern patriarchy represented subversive and ineffectual femininity. To counter the authorisation of delay and of femininity which the virtues of Christian forbearance necessitate and to reassert the binary distinction between male, authorised action and female, subversive delay which is commonly used to maintain patriarchal order, I suggest revenge tragedies present a new binary distinction between action and delay. In these plays, the male propensity to act in the moment is validated as a kind of morally superior instantaneous vengeance in opposition to a female, sadistic deferral of revenge which is aligned with the pernicious cruelty of the foreign other. I have argued that female revengers are presented as ineffectual as a result of their delayed temporality. Ultimately, that ineffectuality runs the risk of legitimising women within a Christian ideology which values patience over action; if female revengers fail to enact revenge, they cannot be condemned as religiously subversive. Therefore I suggest that in these plays we see female delay positioned as defining not only female ineffectuality, but also female cruelty, thus shoring

up the binary opposition between authorised male action and subversive female delay which the Christian condemnation of revenge challenges.

As Fredson Bowers suggests, foreign characters are often depicted in these plays as garnering a sadistic pleasure from the torturous deferral of revenge, a pleasure which the morally orthodox Christian Englishman, who chooses to act in the moment, rejects. He argues that in the sixteenth century, '[s]low revenge provides the greatest enjoyment' and it is this sadistic pleasure as it is derived from the *delay* of revenge which is condemned by the Christian church (Bowers, 45). Bowers suggests that '[c]haracteristic English hatred of secrecy and treachery could, and did, excuse an open killing in hot blood [. . .] Premeditated, secret, unnatural murder, however, struck a chord of horror' (Bowers, 16-7). Bowers argues that revenge in the immediate moment following an attack was considered more honourable than protracted strategies of retaliation: 'English practice confined itself in general to immediate assault or formal duel', he suggests (Bowers, 30). Bowers positions strategies of delay, 'the long nursing of revenge and the use of accomplices', in opposition to this immediate form of legitimated revenge, which he suggests was typical of revenge as it was enacted on the continent, particularly in Italy (Bowers, 30). He argues that 'the long endurance of the Italian revenger's enmity was proverbial in England', and that the 'treacherous and Italianate features' of revenge were those of deferral and delay (Bowers, 51, 37). Bowers suggests there was a clear temporal binary which divided the durative nature of foreign revenge from the more honourable immediacy of revengeful acts in England. Although all acts of revenge are necessarily delayed to an extent (revenge is after all by definition a retaliation which implies a hiatus) some, it seems, are more delayed and therefore more subversive than others. He argues that '[i]t was this artistry in revenge, this waiting for the moment of weakness in the destined victim, even though years elapsed, this



fanatic determination to revenge – but without risk – which the hotheaded and forthright Englishman could not understand’ (Bowers, 51).

We see this stereotypically cruel, Italianate deferral of revenge most clearly in *Antonio’s Revenge*. At the climax of the play, Piero, the Machiavellian villain, faces his punishment. As Antonio, Maria, Alberto, Balurdo and Pandulpho ready themselves to stab him, Pandulpho instigates a pause:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <i>Antonio</i>   | Thus charge we death at thee. Remember hell;<br>And let the howling murmurs of black spirits,<br>The horrid torments of the damnèd ghosts,<br>Affright thy soul as it descendeth down<br>Into the entrails of the ugly deep. |
| <i>Pandulpho</i> | Sa, sa; no, let him die and die, and still be dying.<br><i>They offer to run all at PIERO and on a sudden stop</i><br>And yet not die, till he hath died and died<br>Ten thousand deaths in agony of heart.                  |
| <i>Antonio</i>   | Now, pell-mell!  |

(5.5.68-76)

These Italian revengers know the effect their delay will have and cruelly prolong their cold-blooded killing. In other plays set in Italy, revengers similarly acknowledge the powerful impact of delayed revenge. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the Duchess herself pleads for a speedy death, telling Bosola that ‘[i]t is some mercy, when men kill with speed’ (4.1.110). Unfortunately her wish not to be ‘tedious’ to her killers, as they end what she has described as the ‘tedious theatre’ of her life, is not granted; there are some 117 lines between the moment that she is strangled and her death (4.2.226, 4.1.84). However, *The Duchess of Malfi* also subverts the stereotype of the cruel Italian villain who revels in the protraction of revenge. The Cardinal describes the delayed nature of poison as a murder weapon, which ‘may chance lie | Spread in thy veins, and kill thee seven years hence’ (5.2.264-5). His statement is ironic however, considering that his victim, Julia, having kissed a poisoned Bible, dies almost instantly. Later in the period, *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore* explicitly states and therefore perhaps parodies the stereotypical cruelty of the foreign revenger which was

so common in Jacobean revenge tragedy. Vasques counsels Soranzo in his plans for revenge, and when Soranzo declares that '[d]elay in vengeance gives a heavier blow' and that only 'blood shall quench the flame' of his vengeance, Vasques applauds him, saying '[n]ow you begin to turn Italian!' (4.3.162, 5.4.27-8)

I suggest that the binary which divides the legitimate revenge of the Englishman in the moment from the subversive strategies of deferred revenge on the continent has a gendered dimension. It works to reposition female revengers, defined on one level by their subversive action, as agents of delay. Bowers suggests women, like Italians, are constructed through revenge tragedy as deriving sadistic pleasure from prolonging the act of revenge. He uses the historical example of Francis Howard and her slow poisoning of Overbury in the Tower to illustrate his point (Bowers, 25-6). Although all revenge is theologically condemned, through revenge tragedy, the female protraction of revenge over a long period of time as opposed to the male action of revenge in the moment works to recreate the binary which separates authorised male action and subversive female delay, a binary which as I have suggested is fundamentally challenged by the Christian condemnation of revenge. One of the most vivid examples of this distinction between masculine revenge in the immediate moment and the drawn-out nature of female revenge is apparent in the contrast between the figures of Titus and Tamora and their strategies for revenge as they are presented in act one of *Titus Andronicus*. Titus' shockingly immediate response to Mutius' rebellion is directly pitched against the insidious threat posed by the brooding Tamora, who promises that she will 'find a day to massacre them [the Andronici] all' (1.1.447). Although, as previously suggested, Tamora is presented as wanting to act in the instant by killing Lavinia herself in the forest, as a woman and a racial other, Tamora also epitomises the binary distinction between honourable, masculine revenge in the moment and cruel, protracted, female and foreign revenge structured by a strategy of subversive delay.

Alison Findlay, in direct contrast to the arguments presented by Rice and Burnett, suggests that revenge in the early modern period was created as a specifically female vice *because* of the dishonourable and subversive threat it posed to patriarchal society and to male identity specifically. She argues that revenge tragedy is a specifically female genre, 'in spite of the fact that the revenge protagonists are usually male and female characters appear to play more passive roles'.<sup>38</sup> She agrees with Fredson Bowers' assertion that 'women were noted for their revengefulness in Elizabethan life' and goes further to suggest that revenge in the early modern period was more broadly constructed as a 'feminine impulse', simply *because* it was a transgressive impulse (Bowers, 67, Findlay, 50). At the heart of her argument is the binary which separates 'paternal biblical law and crazy maternal revenge' (Findlay, 53). For Findlay, revenge is figured female in the early modern period because of what she describes as the 'fundamental fears about women, relating to maternal power and to female agency', which permeate patriarchal society and which are positioned in opposition to God's command that vengeance is his alone (Findlay, 49). The work done in this section of the chapter supports Findlay's reading of revenge by suggesting that whereas the delay of revenge for men *can* suggest their Christian moral conscience, the delay of revenge for women only suggests their subversion as either ineffectual or cruel.

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<sup>38</sup> Alison Findlay, *A feminist perspective on Renaissance drama* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p.49.

vi      **Authorising male delay, condemning female action**

As well as defining the sexualised, sadistic female revenger as inherently delayed, in these revenge tragedies a different temporal strategy is also employed. These plays, I suggest, also present delay as a confirmation of authoritative and legitimised masculinity, rather than of subversive femininity. I argue that because delay is authorised within a Christian temporal framework, men are presented as particularly masculine and authorised through delay in these plays in order to support the dominance of men within the patriarchal order. Similarly, because action is condemned by that same framework, women are presented as particularly feminine and subversive through their action in order to justify their subjection.

This strategy is exemplified in *The Changeling*. I suggest the act of murder transforms De Flores from a man disempowered by delay to one whose masculine sexual authority is defined *by* delay. As I have already suggested, Beatrice-Joanna uses the delay of his language to feminise De Flores. But it is this same delay of language which he employs, having killed Alonzo, in order to assert his sexual authority over her. Although I have argued that he denies Beatrice-Joanna's delay in order to act '[q]uickly!' and in the moment, he orchestrates the action of their sexual congress through the delay of his eloquence (3.4.104). When De Flores tells her that '[j]ustice invites your blood to understand me', she responds with these words:

[. . .] O, I never shall!  
Speak it yet further off, that I may lose  
What has been spoken, and no sound remain on't.  
I would not hear so much offence again  
For such another deed.

(3.4.103-8)

It is through the delay of his words that De Flores physically dominates Beatrice-Joanna to assert his masculine sexual authority. She complains to him in her distress that his 'language is [. . .] bold and vicious' (3.4.126). The delay of his words ultimately enables his

sexual satisfaction in opposition to Beatrice-Joanna's silent female submission: 'Silence is one of pleasure's best receipts', he consoles his panting, speechless, turtle-dove (3.4.171). Whereas I have argued elsewhere that the delay of language feminises male characters, here is an example of eloquence as a delay serving to confirm the sexual authority of men. Similarly, Alsemero, who I have suggested is temporally defined in opposition to De Flores, is also ultimately masculinised by his delay. I have suggested that he is delayed by Beatrice-Joanna as a sexual temptress who halts his linear progress and forces him to repetition. I have also suggested that his masculinity is confirmed by his denial of her delay, as represented through his rejection of the delay of language itself – his repetition is a denial of the delay of verbosity. However, repetition is as much a use of language as it is a rejection of it, and it is possible to argue that, ultimately, it is through the delay of repetition that Alsemero asserts his masculine authority and claims Beatrice-Joanna as his future wife.

Pandulpho in *Antonio's Revenge* provides us with another example of a male character who is masculinised by his delay. I have already suggested that a stoic passivity feminises Pandulpho in opposition to Antonio's masculine impatience. I have also illustrated how the delay of that passivity culminates in the pause which prolongs the villainous Piero's life and his suffering, thus aligning Pandulpho as a revenger with what I have suggested was defined as the specifically feminised cruelty of deferred vengeance. Pandulpho, in his passivity and inaction, 'serves to indicate that there is a response to injustice other than passionate fury, that of rational endurance'.<sup>39</sup> That response to injustice is, in this play, as I have suggested, highly feminised. However, in the introduction to his edition of *Antonio's Revenge*, W. Reavley Gair argues that Pandulpho's passivity is

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<sup>39</sup> Charles A. Hallett and Elaine S. Hallett, '*Antonio's Revenge* and the Integrity of the Revenge Tragedy Motifs', *Studies in Philology*, 76 (1979), 366-86 (p. 373).

presented as masculine and mature in opposition to Antonio's childish, feminised railings: 'This antithesis between Pandulpho's and Antonio's conclusions and behaviour', Gair argues, 'is maintained consistently as a contrast between the conduct of a boy and that of an adult: for Pandulpho, from the outset, is treated as a man, whereas Antonio is spoken of as a "sweet youth"' (Gair, 36). This counters my suggestion that Pandulpho is feminised by his delayed temporality; Gair suggests it is his stoic deferral of revenge which in fact defines his mature masculinity.<sup>40</sup>

As I have suggested, in these plays, women, particularly new brides, are considered dangerous in their ability to delay men through sexual action. This is made clear in *Antonio's Revenge*, when Antonio asks Castilio to sing an epithamalion to Mellida on the morning she is to be married: 'Sing one of Signior Renaldo's airs | To rouse the slumb'ring bride from gluttoning | In surfeit of superfluous sleep' (1.3.86-8). Although at this point Antonio has no reason to doubt Mellida's fidelity and chastity, the language he uses – she is a slumbering glutton – hints at the anxiety which underpins his desire to wake her. He makes her one of the 'sleepy sluts' Vermandero describes in *The Changeling* (5.1.106). Once they are married, women pose a threat to male action by tempting them to languish in bed through the delay that paradoxically defines their sexual action. The passive nature of sleep, which I have previously suggested is expressive of virginal abstraction, becomes a euphemism for subversive sexual action and the delay of men. However, in *Titus Andronicus*, this delay of male action is revealed as a confirmation of masculinity rather than a destabilisation of it. Titus enters at the beginning of 2.2 to 'wake the Emperor and

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<sup>40</sup> The Roman general Quintus Fabius Maximus, whose agnomen, 'Cuncator' (meaning 'Delayer') referred to his successful tactics of attrition during the Second Punic War, provided the early modern reader of Plutarch, who included 'Fabius' in his *Lives*, with a model of powerful masculinity defined, as is Pandulpho, by deferral and passive inaction. See Mary Beth Rose, *Gender and heroism in early modern English literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), for more on the idea that in the seventeenth century 'the heroism of endurance takes precedence over the heroics of action' (p. xii). For an explicit example of authorised masculinity aligned with delay, see Vasques accusation that Soranzo is 'unmanlike' in his inability to delay revenge in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (4.3.80).

his lovely bride' with a hunter's peal (2.2.4). Saturninus, Tamora, Bassianus and Lavinia (along with Chiron, Demetrius and attendants) then enter, and Saturninus rather sarcastically thanks Titus for his wake-up call:

|                   |   |  |
|-------------------|---|--|
| <i>Titus</i>      | I promised your grace a hunter's peal.  |  |
| <i>Saturninus</i> | And you have rung it lustily, my lords,<br>Somewhat too early for new-married ladies. |  |
| <i>Bassianus</i>  | Lavinia, how say you?   |  |
| <i>Lavinia</i>    |   | I say no.<br>I have been broad awake two hours and more. |

(2.2.13-17)

Lavinia and Bassianus' exchange could be performed suggestively; one possible implication of their dialogue is that they have been awake and enthusiastically enjoying their first night together as a married couple. However, these words do not demonise Lavinia as a delaying sexual temptress. Bassianus and Lavinia are both ready to hunt *because* of the delay of their sexual congress; they are awake as a result of their consummation. The delay of sex, which Antonio in his concerns for his 'slumb'ring bride' seems so anxious about even *before* his wedding night, actually works to make Bassianus more, not less, ready to act. It confirms rather than challenges his masculinity.

If men are masculinised by delay in revenge tragedy, are they similarly feminised by action? A consideration of Tomazo in *The Changeling* suggests this is indeed the case. *The Changeling* works to complicate the concept of masculinity confirmed through *occasio* which I have outlined earlier in the chapter. Tomazo, the revenging brother, is kept in a state of ignorance concerning the identity of Alonzo's killer for the majority of the play. Characters who are accused of delaying their revenge, such as Hamlet, Hieronimo and Titus, actually often face a delay such as this which is not of their own making but which prevents them from taking action. However, rather than acting immediately once the identity of the murderer is uncovered, these characters often perpetuate that delay by taking their time to engineer the perfect moment in which to reap their revenge, or simply by

waiting for a divinely ordained moment in which to act. Tomazo denies both of these strategies of delay by acting immediately. He refuses to be delayed by his ignorance and refuses to wait for a moment of divinely ordained or mortally engineered *occasio*. Instead, he defines *every* moment as the possible instant of his revenge:

[. . .] because  
I am ignorant in who my wrath should settle,  
I must think all men villains, and the next  
I meet – whoe'er he be – the murderer  
Of my most worthy brother

(5.2.4-8)

He deconstructs the concept of *occasio* by multiplying it in the extreme; if every moment is the chosen moment, no moment is. Tomazo's action serves to challenge the idea that man must assert his masculinity by claiming control in the moment. By seizing every instant as the instant in which to act, Tomazo does not lay claim to an active masculinity, but instead suggests his own ineffectuality. Ultimately, he is prevented from wreaking his revenge by De Flores' suicide. Thus Tomazo's parody of the revenger is also a parody of *occasio* and a deconstruction of action in the right moment as the legitimate assertion of authoritative masculinity.

In the same way that men are confirmed as masculine through what I am suggesting is the legitimisation of delay in these plays, women are confirmed as subversively female through their illegitimate actions in line with a Christian condemnation of action as an impious rejection of patience. Revenge tragedy works to bring action in line with subversive femininity, in the same way it works to bring delay in line with authorised masculinity. Whereas, as I have suggested, Rice and Burnett argue that female revenge is positioned as ineffectual because of women's innate inability to act, other critics, such as Gwynne Kennedy, argue that women's revenge is figured as transgressive because of women's naturally subversive and sexualised *action*. Female revenge, Kennedy suggests,



such as that of Tamora in *Titus Andronicus*, is undermined by 'linking the woman's desire for revenge with lust or pride or by condemning the pleasure she anticipates from revenge'; these plays define female revenge as a relinquishment of self-control rather than as an authoritative assertion of identity.<sup>41</sup> As such female revenge is devalued against male revenge, which is presented as somehow more honourable, noble and rational.

We see this denigration of action as symptomatic of subversive femininity in *Titus Andronicus*. In 1.1, Tamora begs the Andronici to spare the life of her son. Titus himself positions Tamora's delay – the delay of her pleading – as an action, by bidding her to be patient. 'Thrice-noble Titus, spare my first-born son', she begs, to which Titus responds '[p]atient yourself, madam' (1.1.120-1). By requesting her patience, Titus defines her as impatient and as active in that impatience. Her barbarity as a Goth and a woman is thus defined not by her delay but by her action as it is delineated by Titus. Ultimately, Tamora inhabits this identity of action, which Titus creates for her at the very beginning of the play, by becoming Revenge herself. Whereas men create *occasio* as a woman in order to dominate the moment, Tamora creates Revenge as a woman in order to act through the moment. Thus Titus makes action subversive and female by defining Tamora's delay *as* action.

Kyd similarly makes action subversive by aligning it with Bel-Imperia as clandestine female revenger. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Bel-Imperia is presented as disguising her action – the action of her revenge – as delay in order to preserve her identity of virtuous femininity. Although as I have already suggested, she counsels herself to delay, telling herself that she 'must constrain [her]self to patience', and that she must 'bear it [revenge] out for fashion's sake' like Tamora, Bel-Imperia actively plots to achieve her

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<sup>41</sup> Gwynne Kennedy, 'Gender and the Pleasures of Revenge', in *Feminisms and early modern texts: essays for Phyllis Rackin*, ed. by Rebecca Ann Bach and Gwynne Kennedy (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2010), pp. 152-71 (p. 152).

revenge (3.9.12, 4.1.24). She goes as far as to tell the audience in no uncertain terms that she dissembles in her love for Horatio in order to reap revenge on Balthazar:

But how can love find harbour in my breast,  
Til I revenge the death of my beloved?  
Yes, second love shall further my revenge.  
I'll love Horatio, my Andrea's friend,  
The more to spite the prince that wrought his end.

(1.4.64-68)

She pretends to conform to the identity of the beguiling female agent of sexualised delay, yet she is revealed to the audience to be actively plotting revenge. In 2.2, she uses the image of a ship at sea, commonly a symbol of Fortune, to describe her love for Horatio:

My heart, sweet friend, is like a ship at sea:  
She wisheth port, where riding all at ease,  
She may repair what stormy times have worn,  
And leaning on the shore, may sing with joy  
That pleasure follows pain, and bliss annoy.  
Possession of thy love is th'only port,  
Wherein my heart, with fears and hopes long tossed,  
Each hour doth wish and long to make resort

(2.2.7-14)

However, we know that it is not Fortune which guides her toward Horatio. Her heart is not tossed like a ship at sea, but actively driven by her own sure hand in order to achieve her plans for revenge. Thus Kyd aligns Bel-Imperia's action with the deception of her clandestine revenge; she is confirmed as subversive not in her delay, but through her action.

So, by asserting the Christian condemnation of the action of revenge, but aligning that action with women, and by similarly aligning the delay of Christian piety with men, these plays simultaneously both challenge the patriarchal binary intersection of the axes of gender and delay, which I am arguing shaped gendered identities in early modern society, and yet also preserve the authority of men over the subversion of women.

## **Conclusion**

By outlining all the ways in which revenge tragedy attempts to preserve the patriarchal binary which opposes authorised, male action and subversive, female delay, I am in fact arguing for the particularly orthodox nature of the genre. My analysis of these plays has suggested that the binary opposition of action and delay is constantly being manipulated in order to preserve male dominance. In revenge tragedy, men are portrayed as acting to confirm their masculinity and as feminised by strategies of delay. Furthermore, women are demonised through their association with delay as sadistic and cruel. The authority of male action continually finds ways to assert itself against the subversion of female delay, despite the fact that within the discourse of revenge, it is patience that is venerated, and action which is condemned. I suggest these plays go as far as to attempt to reposition the binary of action and delay in order to legitimise male dominance. Ultimately, by aligning men with delay, revenge tragedy succeeds in authorising masculinity within a discourse which reveres patience. However, these plays also question the stability of that authority by deconstructing the binary opposition between male authorised action and female subversive delay, an opposition which, as a specific intersection of the axes of time and gender, was frequently presented in order to assert patriarchal authority on the early modern stage.

## Coda

### Lady Anne Clifford: the ‘postponed heiress’ and the memory of theatre<sup>1</sup>

[A] little before his death he expressed with much affection to my mother and me a great belief that he had, that his brother’s son would die without issue male, and thereby all his lands would come to be mine; which accordingly befell, about thirty-eight years after.<sup>2</sup>

This extract is taken from one of Lady Anne Clifford’s memoirs, written in 1652 and commonly known as the *Life of Me*. The death of George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, instigated an inheritance dispute between Lady Anne and her uncle, to whom her father had willed his extensive lands and properties. As a result of this dispute, Lady Anne did not inherit the estates she believed were rightfully hers until 1643. In this short extract from the considerable volume of autobiographical writings she produced during her long life, delay is both liminal, in that Lady Anne makes no direct mention of the frustration which the deferral of her inheritance inspired, and also central: the delay *is* the forty-seven years *in-between* which connect the Lady Anne remembered at her father’s deathbed with the Lady Anne remembering in 1652. It is this time in-between – this delay itself – which structures a significant portion of Lady Anne’s long life and, as I shall argue, is central to the conceptualisation and presentation of her gendered self.

At the time she wrote this extract, the deferral of Lady Anne’s inheritance had come to an end; this memoir is a triumphant reflection on the termination of a delay which

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<sup>1</sup> Eileen Spring, *Law, land, and family: aristocratic inheritance in England, 1300 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Anne Clifford, *The memoir of 1603 and the diary of 1616-1619*, ed. by Katherine O. Acheson (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Editions, 2007), p. 221. There are various editions of the Clifford diaries available. I have chosen to use Acheson’s excellent edition from 2007 for extracts from the 1603 memoir and the 1616, 1617, and 1619 diaries. I also use Acheson for the extracts from the *Life of Me*, alongside J. P. Gilson’s *Lives of Lady Anne Clifford*. I have used D. J. H. Clifford’s edition for the extracts from the diary of her last months in 1676. Extracts from letters are taken from George Williamson’s biographies of both Lady Anne’s father and Lady Anne herself.

paradoxically only existed *as* a delay once it had been concluded. Writing in 1652, Lady Anne had successfully inherited and inhabited the lands and properties in the north of England which were hers by virtue of her birth. However, as I will go on to explore, both prior to and as a result of the conclusion of these years of hiatus, Lady Anne's life, and her presentation of that life in the numerous autobiographical texts which she continued to produce right up until her last months in 1676, is shaped by her constant negotiation between positions of action and of delay. I conclude this thesis, then, not directly with the genre of drama but with life-writing: however, I will suggest that, in the case of Clifford, in certain ways the former drives the latter. I read Clifford's narrative, that is, as expressive not only of the pervasiveness of the relationship between gender and temporality but also of that between culture and theatre in early-to-mid-seventeenth-century society and of the impact of those relationships on what would later be perceived as the psyche of a particular individual.

As I will explore in this chapter (which forms a substantial coda to the thesis as a whole), Lady Anne's presentation of her life as a Jacobean woman is structured by way of her negotiations of delay and its denial. I suggest that, as a result, Lady Anne's works can valuably be read in relation to the dramatic frameworks of patience, prodigality and revenge as they are presented on the early modern stage, frameworks which, throughout this thesis, I have explored in terms of their negotiation of the temporal and gendered binary oppositions between action and delay and between male and female. It is possible, I argue, to find correlations between the way Lady Anne writes about her experiences of delay and the way in which the plays I have considered in this thesis present delay. For example, like Griselda, Lady Anne has her child taken away from her by a husband keen to test her powers of endurance. Like the 2<sup>nd</sup> Luce of *The Wise Woman of Hoxton*, she is abandoned in the country by a prodigal husband who wastes his money gaming in London.

Like Hamlet, she makes an enemy of an uncle who denies her the realisation of her inheritance.

My aim in this chapter is not to map directly the attitudes to delay and action which Lady Anne presents through her autobiographical works onto the dramatic scenarios of the domestic comedies and revenge tragedies of the early modern period, but rather to argue that Lady Anne could not have written her life as she did had it not been for her early exposure to the dramatic identities of the patient wife, the prodigal husband, and the revenging son of the Jacobean stage. Furthermore, I suggest that as well as early modern theatre shaping a broader cultural awareness of these dramatic temporal identities (an awareness which is reflected in Lady Anne's works), the ubiquitous nature of the temporal binary opposition of action and delay in early modern society in turn influenced the production of temporally defined identities on the early modern stage. The plays and masques which Lady Anne watched, read, and participated in when she was young, and which were in more than one sense written *for* her as an historical and privileged spectator, shape and reinforce the 'early modern temporal consciousness' and the conflicted nature of the binary opposition between action and delay which I have argued defines it. This symbiotic relationship – the mutually generative dramatic and cultural negotiation of action and delay – enabled Lady Anne to use time and the temporal tropes of patience, prodigality and revenge to structure her own gendered identity. Thus her life and writings exemplify the way in which delay and its denial work, as I have argued throughout this thesis, to determine both the cultural and theatrical gendering of the early modern subject.

In this final section of the thesis, then, I will explore Lady Anne's autobiographical works so as to consider how she uses the binary opposition of action and delay as it is presented via the dramatic identities of the patient wife, the prodigal husband and the revenging son, to define both her struggle to inherit and her gendered position within

seventeenth-century society. In section one, I explore the earliest of Lady Anne's autobiographical texts, the memoir of 1603, in which she reflects on the imposed delays of her virginity. In section two, I outline the events of the inheritance dispute, and suggest the ways in which Lady Anne is created as a 'postponed heiress'. Sections three and four both draw on the diaries of 1616, 1617 and 1619 which detail the inheritance dispute at its dramatic peak, to consider Lady Anne as, firstly, a subversive agent of male delay, and secondly, a self-created patient wife. Finally, in section five, I consider the ways in which we can read Lady Anne's memoir of 1652, and the daily diary from the last months of her life in 1676, as testament to her ability to use delay in order to wreak her own kind of revenge. I consider how Lady Anne remembers the delay which defined her inheritance and her Jacobean past when she is in her eighties, ultimately suggesting that delay enables her to position herself as an active rather than passive agent within her own life story. At each of these phases of her life, I wish to argue, her thinking shares with the theatrical representations I have analysed in this thesis a particular understanding of the relationship between gender, identity and time.

i      **‘[K]ept inclosed with so many eyes, | As that it cannot stray and breake  
abroade’: defining virginity as delay<sup>3</sup>**

As a young woman, before she presents herself as both a ‘postponed heiress’ and a patient wife, Lady Anne is circumscribed by the delay which defines her virginity. Her identity as a virtuous maid is dependent on the deferral of sexual activity. Like both *Hamlet*’s Ophelia and the Griselda of legend, her chastity is defined as a period of delay by the inevitability of her future marriage which will legitimately bring that delay to a patriarchally authorised conclusion. In this section I will explore both how Lady Anne presents herself in the memoir in which she recalls her experiences at court as a thirteen-year-old girl in 1603, and how she is presented by others, through the delayed identity of the virgin which, as this thesis has explored, is one of the most powerful dramatic ‘types’ of delayed femininity on the early modern stage.

The earliest extant piece of autobiographical writing produced by Lady Anne is her short yet spectacularly vivid chronicle of 1603, the year in which she celebrated her thirteenth birthday. The chronicle, Katherine Acheson hypothesises, was ‘probably written after the events it describes, but not long after’ (Clifford, *Memoir*, 15). The fact that Lady Anne mentions her marriage to Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset, places its composition post 1609, and an additional layer of memory is added to the chronicle in the form of the marginal annotations Lady Anne makes at an unspecified later date. Detailing both Queen Elizabeth’s death and King James’ accession to the throne, Lady Anne recounts the entertainments, progressions and celebrations which structured the lives of the aristocracy as they jostled for favour with the new monarch. She describes the court as being subsumed by an atmosphere of tense anticipation; she remembers the ‘Lords and Ladies, being all full

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel Daniel, *A panegyrike congratulatorie to the Kings Maiestie Also certaine epistles*, by Samuel Daniel (London, 1603), E5v.



of several hopes', striving against one other to secure a place in the King's affections (Clifford, *Memoir*, 45). However, as Lady Anne makes clear, those 'expecting mountains' were often bitterly disappointed at only 'finding molehills' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 45). The court she presents to the reader is as brutal and terrifying as it is glittering and enticing for the thirteen-year-old observer. Lady Anne mentions the rise of the Howard family, the release of Henry Wriothsley from the tower, and the subtle battles for preferment which are undertaken by the Queen's ladies in waiting.<sup>4</sup>

The Cliffords seem to have been relatively successful in their bid to find favour with the new royal family; Lady Anne's father entertains the King and Queen at his estate, Grafton Lodge, with 'speeches and delicate presents', and she and her mother, Lady Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, move with the royal family and an 'infinite company of Lords and Ladies' between Windsor Castle and Hampton Court (Clifford, *Memoir*, 53). Lady Anne and her mother accompany Queen Anna and Prince Henry as they progress between country estates, and it is at Althorpe, one such estate, that the young Lady Anne is likely to have witnessed the performance of a royal entertainment written by Ben Jonson. 'The Satyr', as this entertainment is now known, was written for the Queen and Prince Henry, and performed in the 'Parke' of the estate.<sup>5</sup> During this entertainment, elves and faeries performed for the royal family, and a 'brace of choise Deere' were 'fortunately kill'd [. . .] in sight of her Maiestie' (Jonson, *Satyr*, 4D6v). If Lady Anne did witness the performance of Jonson's work, it would have been her first taste of the kind of elaborate entertainment which she would eventually perform in herself alongside Queen Anna as a masquer at court.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Lady Anne tells us that '[n]ow was my Lady Rich grown great with the Queen insomuch as my Lady of Bedford was something out with her' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 57).

<sup>5</sup> Ben Jonson, *The workes of Beniamin Ionson* (London, 1616), 4D4r.

The chronicle gives us a sense of the tight control Lady Anne was under as a thirteen-year-old girl; she was subject to the authority of her parents, particularly her mother, who acted to preserve her chastity by closely policing her actions. She recalls travelling with her mother, aunt and cousin between country houses, and being punished for 'riding before with Mr Menerell' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 55). Lady Anne tells us that her mother 'in her anger commanded that I should lie in a chamber alone', presumably without her maid servant (Clifford, *Memoir*, 55). As one of the wealthiest young heiresses in the country, Lady Anne's honour – her virginity and subsequently her value as an object of marital exchange – is under vigilant supervision; riding alone with a gentleman is not permissible.

The incident with Mr. Menerell provides us with a sexual context for the control Lady Anne's mother exerts over her as a young virgin; by not allowing her to act, her mother works to preserve her modesty. Lady Anne tells us she is prevented from taking part in many official ceremonies. She is too young and her chastity is too valuable for her to be allowed to act independently within court society. For example, she is not allowed to take her turn watching over the Queen's corpse with her mother and aunt. She bemoans that 'my Lady [her mother] would not give me leave to watch by reason I was held too young' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 45). Similarly, she is not allowed to be one of the mourners at the Queen's funeral procession, 'because', she tells us, 'I was not high enough' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 45). Her youth works in conjunction with her gender to delay her action; the necessary passivity of the virgin prevents her active contribution to court society.

In his dedicatory epistle to Lady Anne, his young pupil, Samuel Daniel also establishes her value in terms of her 'honour', an honour which he suggests her mother works hard to protect:

She [Lady Anne's mother] tells you too, how that it [her honour]  
 bounded is,  
 And kept inclosed with so many eyes,  
 As that it cannot stray and breake abroad  
 Into the priuate wayes of carelesnesse,  
 Nor euer may descend to vulgarize,  
 Or be below the sphere of her abode.  
 But like to those supernall bodies set  
 Within their Orbs, must keep the certaine course  
 Of order, destin'd to their proper place;  
 Which only doth their note of glory get.

(E5v)

Through her mother's vigilance, Lady Anne remains in her 'proper place', as a virtuous maid, delaying male sexual fulfilment until a match is made which will create her as a wife and mother to future generations of legitimate nobility. She is physically contained in space, and temporally in time, through her delayed identity as virgin. At the end of the poem, Daniel describes the 'holy bounds' of her duty, which is to:

[. . .] conuay  
 (If God so please) the honourable bloud  
 Of *Clifford*, and of *Russell*, led aright  
 To many worthy stemmes whose off-spring may  
 Looke backe with comfort, to haue had that good  
 To spring from such a branch that grew s'vp'right;  
 Since nothing cheeres the heart of greatnesse more  
 Then th'Ancestors faire glory gone before.

(E6r)

Lady Anne is a vessel through which the noble blood of her forefathers is transported to future generations. For Lady Anne, as for all early modern women and for the female characters of early modern drama I have considered in this thesis, virginity is defined by the delayed satisfaction of male sexual desire. In turn, preserving virginity necessarily delays female action, as we see in Lady Anne's chronicle and in Daniel's poem.

In Aemilia Lanyer's poem 'The Description of Cooke-ham', Lady Anne's innocence as a young teenage girl is presented within the frame of a lost pastoral idyll which the poet shares with Lady Anne and her mother. Her virginity, however, although

existing in this period of hiatus – of delay – is figured as *actively* innocent: ‘Remember beauteous *Dorsets* former sports’, Lanyer purportedly reminisces, ‘[s]o farre from beeing toucht by ill reports’.<sup>6</sup> Lanyer therefore challenges the binary opposition between authorised, male action and subversive, female delay by suggesting female *action* – paradoxically expressed through the delayed temporality of the passive virgin – expresses female virtue. The poet thus presents a model of authorised female action which posits a subversive challenge to patriarchal authority and the enforced ‘delay’ of women. However, ultimately Lady Anne’s marriage to the Earl of Dorset which has taken place at the time Lanyer writes the poem (between 1609 and 1611), creates the former period of Lanyer’s virginity as a delay, a delay of pastoral innocence which is concluded when male sexual desire is satisfied and legitimate genealogical continuation is ensured.

There are some hints in the memoir, however, as in Lanyer’s poem, that this virginal identity, defined by passivity, obedience and a willingness to wait, is not the whole story for the young Lady Anne. She describes her younger self thinking and acting in ways which reveal what would have been considered to be an immodest impatience and recklessness for a young woman: a refusal to wait. For example, on two occasions she comments on her propensity to overeat. When her mother forbids her to attend the King’s coronation, she tells us that she ‘continued at Norbury where my cousin did feed me with breakfasts, and pear pies and such things, as shortly I fell into the green sickness’ (Clifford, *Memoir*, 55). Similarly, at the very end of the memoir, she tells us that she ‘kept so ill a diet [. . .] in eating fruit’ that she ‘fell shortly after into the green sickness’ (Clifford, *Memoir*, 59). Although Katherine Acheson glosses green sickness as ‘a term used for anemia, common in adolescent girls’, these two references seem to suggest a connection between

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<sup>6</sup> Aemilia Lanyer, ‘*The Description of Cooke-ham*’, in *The poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, ed. by Susanne Woods (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), ll. 119-20.

Lady Anne's appetite for good food and her ill health which has little to do with a lack of iron in her blood (Clifford, *Memoir*, 47, n13).

In other moments, Lady Anne seems similarly distanced from the 'inclosed' and carefully 'bounded' young woman Samuel Daniel describes. As the whole of the court rush to meet with the new Queen, Lady Anne and her mother join the race, over taking her aunt in their scramble to reach the royal party, and in one day killing three horses 'with extreme of heat' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 49). This image of Lady Anne and her mother riding horses to death in an attempt to win favour with Queen Anna is at odds with the passivity and modesty Daniel attributes to his young charge. I suggest that by presenting her youthful impatience in this way, the Lady Anne who constructs this memoir as a mature, married woman, attempts to distance herself from the chaste maid – both circumscribed and frustrated by delay – who she remembers. By highlighting the time between 1603 and the time of writing, Lady Anne emphasises the maturation of her authorial and married self, and creates the period of her virginity as a delay which has been successfully concluded.

Lady Anne employs other techniques to highlight the gap between her remembered and writing selves. At the very beginning of the memoir, she makes it clear that she is writing as a married woman who remembers a virginal past. She tells us that the message of the Queen's death 'was delivered to my mother and me in the same chamber where afterwards I was married' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 43). In a marginal annotation, added at an unknown date, she again reiterates this point, stating that '[a]t the death of this worthy Queen my mother and I lay at Austin Friars in the same chamber where afterwards I was married' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 42). This temporal distancing is also apparent when, having been excluded from the Queen's funeral procession, she confesses that not being able to attend, 'did much trouble me then' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 45). With a single word, Lady Anne

distances her mature, married, present-day self – the self that writes the chronicle – from the childish thirteen-year-old whose frustrations shaped the ‘then’ of her earlier years.

Although her powers of recollection are impressive, Lady Anne frequently comments on the fallibility of her memory. She forgets the names of people she spent time with, and the places she visited.<sup>7</sup> By reminding the reader that this is a memorial reconstruction of a year long passed, Lady Anne stresses the distance between the self that writes and the self that is remembered, and thus subsequently defines the past as a period of delay which has been concluded. In fact, the memoir suggests that even her thirteen-year-old self was conscious that her identity as a virgin delineated a period of delay on her path to maturation. At the very beginning of the memoir, she tells us that ‘if Queen Elizabeth had lived’, her aunt, Anne Russell, Countess of Warwick, ‘intended to have preferred me to be of the Privy Chamber, for at that time’, she tells us, ‘there was as much expectation of me both for my person and my fortunes as of any other young lady whatsoever’ (Clifford, *Memoir*, 43). At the same time as Lady Anne looks back to her youth, she positions her thirteen-year-old self as looking forward into a future which inevitably promises marriage and the conclusion of the ‘delay’ which describes her virginity.

Lady Anne’s relationship with the Queen is another marker of her maturation away from the delayed identity of virginity she remembers. As I have suggested, it is clear at the beginning of the memoir that Lady Anne once harboured ambitions to be part of Queen Elizabeth’s privy chamber. It is difficult to imagine that this young girl would not also have been keen to be similarly close to the new Queen Anna. However, in a marginal annotation to the text added at an unknown later date, she presents herself as relieved that she was never invited to join Queen Anna’s inner circle, suggesting that ‘there was such infinite

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<sup>7</sup> Lady Anne tells us she visits a sister of Lady Needum’s ‘whose name I have forgotten’ and although she recalls riding through Oxford ‘once or twice’, she cannot recall the aim of her visits: ‘whither we went I remember not’ (Clifford, *Memoir*, 49, 57).

number of Ladies sworn of the Queen's Privy Chamber as made the place of no esteem or credit', and suggesting that she 'had the good fortune to miss' any such preferment (Clifford, *Memoir*, 52). She ends the memoir with the following moral condemnation of the new Queen:

Now there was much talk of a masque which the Queen had at Winchester and how all the ladies about the court had gotten such ill-names that it was grown a scandalous place, and the Queen herself much fallen from her former greatness and reputation she had in the world.

(Clifford, *Memoir*, 59)

Here we see Lady Anne rejecting Queen Anna and her favourites, perhaps in an attempt to ameliorate the rejection she herself felt as a young woman unable to secure a place in the Queen's favour. The fact that, in 1608, 1609 and 1610, Lady Anne actually appeared in masques with Queen Anna suggests that at the time of writing, Lady Anne had successfully infiltrated the inner circle she presents her younger self dismissing. Indeed, by 1617, Lady Anne was close to the Queen, who had become not only her masquing partner but also her advisor in the inheritance dispute.<sup>8</sup> Thus through her memoir, we are made aware of the distance between Lady Anne's mature, favoured, married self, and the immature, ill-favoured and virginal self of her past.

As I have illustrated, as a young virgin, Lady Anne is delayed in her actions by a society which is keen to preserve her virginity. She has an identity of delay forced on her as a chaste maid; as her own writings and those of Daniel show, she is prevented from actively participating in the society which values and therefore protects her 'virtue' as an object of patriarchal exchange. Paradoxically, as I explored in Chapter 2, the virgin also poses a subversive threat to patriarchal society by preventing male sexual satisfaction. Both young

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<sup>8</sup> Lady Anne tells us in her diary of 1617 that the Queen 'kissed me and used me very kindly' and that she gave her 'warning to take heed of putting my matters absolutely to the King lest he should deceive me' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 106, 110). I will return to Lady Anne's masquing later in the chapter.

men and young women are expected to marry, and therefore mature away from the potential subversion of their single status. However, as I outlined in Chapter 3, early modern drama provides a behavioural template – prodigality – for young men which enables them to *act* despite being circumscribed by the delay which defines their unmarried youth. This model is not workable for young women such as Lady Anne, who could never be forgiven for the kind of sexually active ‘riotous living’ which paradoxically defines the prodigal son’s youthful delay. Lady Anne must simply wait for the threat her virginity poses to patriarchal society to be brought to a legitimate conclusion with marriage.

Lady Anne distances herself from this frustrated virginal self throughout her memoir. By thus detaching herself from the past, she constructs a narrative of development and progression which contains the inaction of her virginity as a period of delay that is concluded with marriage, and which, as I have suggested, draws on the narratives of maturation – of both the virgin and the prodigal – which structured early modern literature and theatre. Lady Anne is eager, it seems, to move away from the tight control which perpetuated the delay of her virginal status. However, by 1616, when we next hear from Lady Anne, she has constructed another narrative of self which is equally as dependent on the denial of action and the acceptance of delay as her virginity once was. As I will now go on to explore in sections two, three and four, in marriage Lady Anne did in fact continue to be circumscribed by delay as a ‘postponed heiress’, a delaying obstacle to male fulfilment, and as a patient wife married to a prodigal husband.



ii      **‘[I]t was his office by inheritance, and so is lineally descended on me’: the heiress-in-waiting<sup>9</sup>**

At two points in the memoir of 1603, the reader can sense that Lady Anne is conscious of the inheritance dispute which was underway by the time the chronicle was written and which had such a formative impact on her life and on her writing. I have already mentioned that Lady Anne recalls travelling with the Queen to Althorpe, Lord Spencer’s house, where, she tells us, she and her mother saw her ‘cousin Henry Clifford [her] uncle’s son’, and that this was ‘the first time [they] ever saw him’ (Clifford, *Memoir*, 51). Lady Anne found it important to mark this meeting because ultimately it was on Henry’s childless death that all her hopes for inheriting her father’s properties in the north of England were pinned; when her uncle Francis died, Henry, his son, was to inherit, and if he died without male heir, Lady Anne was next in line. Earlier in the memoir, Lady Anne makes another connection between her experiences in 1603 and the inheritance dispute which at the time of writing was already beginning to dominate her life. She reflects on her inheritance rights as her father’s only surviving child:

As the King came out of Scotland, when he lay at York, there was a strife between by father and my Lord Burleigh, who was then President, who should carry the sword, but it was adjudged on my father’s side, because it was his office by inheritance, and so is lineally descended on me

(Clifford, *Memoir*, 47)

In this moment, Lady Anne is keen to position herself as her father’s sole heir. The Lady Anne who writes the memoir is already conscious, I suggest, of her status as ‘postponed heiress’.

In order to understand the creation of Lady Anne as a ‘postponed heiress’, a role which forced her to inhabit an identity defined by delay for a significant proportion of her

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<sup>9</sup> Clifford, *The Memoir of 1603 and the Diary of 1616-1619*, p. 47.

life, and which is both a latent presence in the memoir of 1603 and the main focus of her diaries of 1616, 1617 and 1619, it is important to grasp the basics of the dispute which continued between 1606 and 1617. Before his death, George Clifford constructed a will which stated that his titles and properties should pass not to his daughter, Lady Anne, but to his brother, Francis, who was subsequently created fourth Earl of Cumberland. That same will provided his widow, Lady Margaret, with a number of jointure properties in the county of Westmorland in the north of England and allocated Lady Anne a generous portion of £15,000 and reversion of the estates should the male line fail. A year after her husband died, Lady Anne's mother decided to take legal action in the interest of what she believed were her daughter's legitimate claims on properties and titles which now belonged to Francis. Between 1606 and 1617, the inheritance dispute between Lady Anne (who, following her marriage in 1609, was represented in the proceedings by her husband), her mother, and her uncle, passed through the Court of Wards and the Court of Common Pleas. The team of lawyers working on behalf of the Clifford women identified a legal loophole which meant that Lady Anne did in fact have a valid legal claim to the Westmorland properties in the north of England, her mother's jointure estates.<sup>10</sup> In 1609, the Court of Wards found in favour of Lady Anne's claim, yet despite this ruling, the dispute continued and ultimately the two women lost their legal battle. King James himself became arbiter of the dispute and in 1617, a year after Lady Margaret had passed away and twelve years after

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<sup>10</sup> For more detail on the 'loophole' the Clifford women identified, see Richard T. Spence, *Lady Anne Clifford: Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery (1590-1676)* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), p. 45. Spence explains that Lady Margaret and her lawyers

by assiduous research, discovered the flaw in Francis's case. When Earl George had taken the precaution (as he thought) of barring the entail by the fine and recovery of 33 Elizabeth, his lawyers had blundered in failing to realize that the reversion had never been taken out of the Crown. By the statute 32 Henry VIII c. 36, when a reversion was still vested in the Crown a fine and recovery were inoperative. The settlement of the estates on Francis was, therefore, invalid and Anne, it appeared, was entitled to inherit as George's surviving heir general.

George Clifford had died, he enforced a settlement which upheld George Clifford's will, and thus Lady Anne's disinheritance. Despite the recognition Lady Anne's claim had been given by the Court of Wards, James ordered that Francis should continue in his possession of the properties and titles, which now, following Lady Margaret's death, included those in Westmorland. The 'King's Award', however, recognised Lady Anne's claim at the same time as it totally disregarded it. James ordered that Francis should pay Lady Anne a settlement of £20,000 as compensation for the loss of her Westmorland estates: £17,000 within two years, and a final £3,000 dependent on Lady Anne's unconditional acceptance of the Award. However, Lady Anne never officially recognised the King's ruling, despite continuing pressure from her husband, who was eager to get his hands on the additional £3,000, to do so. Although Lady Anne made appeals against the King's Award in 1632 and 1637, it was not until the death of her cousin, Henry Clifford, in 1643, which had been preceded two years earlier by the death of her uncle Francis, that Lady Anne finally inherited the lands for which she had waited for so many years.

George Clifford's disinheritance of his daughter was far from unusual in the early modern period.<sup>11</sup> The historian Eileen Spring, in *Law, land, and family: aristocratic inheritance in England, 1300 to 1800*, describes a reduction of female inheritance – of women being 'gradually excluded from that species of property to which power and prestige were attached' – which provides a useful context for exploring the Clifford case (Spring, 97). Spring's thesis hinges on her observation that the Common Law was shaped by a rule which stated that:

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<sup>11</sup> There are several examples of cases similar to that of Lady Anne, in which daughters fight to secure inheritance rights over their collateral male relatives. See Spring, pp. 104-112. Also, see B. Coward, 'Disputed Inheritances: Some Difficulties of the Nobility in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 44.110 (1974), 194-215. Coward describes four disputes which occurred between 1587 and 1616 in which daughters were forced to challenge uncles through the courts.

Land descended to the eldest son to the exclusion of his siblings. The next rule, much less well known, is that if there was no son, land descended to daughters. The common law thus gave a preference to males but a limited preference. It chose son over daughter, but daughter over collateral male. In common law, then, the daughter where there was no son was heir, not her uncle, nor her nephew, nor her male cousin.

(Spring, 9-10)

Despite this legal precedent, within the five hundred year period Spring explores, women were increasingly prevented from inheriting. They are commonly passed over in favour of collateral male relatives, as Lady Anne is for her uncle. Spring shows that although, in accordance with the Common Law, between twenty and twenty-five per cent of land should have passed from fathers to daughters in the period 1540-1780, because of landowners' ability to write wills which excluded the inheritance of daughters, only five per cent actually did. Thus 'since the common law itself when compared to equal division cut female inheritance in half, landowners had actually cut it to less than one-sixth' (Spring, 14).

The practice of writing a will in order to exclude a daughter from the line of inheritance results in what Spring defines as the phenomenon of the 'invisible' heiress in the early modern period (Spring, 23). Spring argues that this disinheritance of women was symptomatic of 'a growth of antifemale sentiment, the growth of a belief that large-scale landowning belonged only to males' (Spring, 96). Spring highlights the fact that 'interest in genealogy became conspicuous in Tudor England', suggesting that this is 'proof of a patrilineal trend and a strengthening of it' (Spring, 94, 95). It seems that George Clifford's rejection of Lady Anne as an appropriate heir illustrates Spring's thesis. Spring defines heiresses in the early modern period as temporally delayed: 'the postponed heiress, the heiress-at-law who was not to succeed to the core of the estate' (Spring, 17). It is thus

possible to consider the legal system as positioning Lady Anne within a disempowering temporal frame of delay.

Lady Anne certainly, if subtly, defines *herself* as a ‘postponed heiress’. The quote from the *Life of Me* with which I began this coda illustrates the fact that Lady Anne depicted herself as a delayed heiress: an heiress-in-waiting. Her account of her disinheritance suggests that Lady Anne herself defines thirty-eight years of her life as primarily structured by unjust delay, and herself as a ‘postponed heiress’: from 1605, when her father dies, until 1643, when she finally comes into her estates having outlived both her uncle and her cousin, she is forced to wait.

In the same way that virginity works to enforce an identity of delay on Lady Anne as a thirteen-year-old girl, the legal system works to enforce the identity of the ‘postponed heiress’ on the married woman she becomes. The words Lady Anne remembers her father speaking on his deathbed – the prophecy she remembers him making – enable Lady Anne to position her suffering as a delay which will be inevitably concluded. Thus the kind of delayed temporality which through my analysis of her memoir of 1603 I have suggested defined Lady Anne as a young virgin, and from which Lady Anne was keen to distance herself, does not come to an end with her marriage. However, as I shall explore throughout this chapter, Lady Anne finds ways to manipulate the identity of delay she has enforced on her to her own advantage. Although there are very few ‘postponed heiresses’ in the literature of the period on which Lady Anne could draw for inspiration in her struggle, there are plenty of delaying women and patient wives, and it is to those figures which I argue Lady Anne turns in order to temporally construct herself her female identity in her autobiographical work.

**iii      ‘Sometimes he used fair means and persuasions, and sometimes foul means but I was resolved before so as nothing would move me’: delay as subversion<sup>12</sup>**

We get a keen sense of Lady Anne’s negotiation of the ‘law’s delay’, which structured the proceedings of the inheritance dispute, from her diaries which details the years 1616, 1617 and 1619 (*Hamlet*, 3.1.71). These diaries position Lady Anne not only delayed as a ‘postponed heiress’, but also as a subversive agent of delay, as defined by her husband, uncle and ultimately, her King. As I shall illustrate in this section, her attempts to secure her inheritance are figured in terms of debilitating delay by men who are keen to achieve a financial settlement in their own favour. Furthermore, I suggest that ultimately Lady Anne’s delay actually becomes her most powerful tool of resistance.

Lady Anne’s biographer, Richard T. Spence, tells us that in 1606 Lady Margaret charged Francis Clifford with purposefully delaying the resolution of the inheritance dispute by refusing to cooperate in the enquiry she had initiated through the Court of Wards, and that ‘[l]ater in the year she repeated her charges of unnecessary delay’ (Spence, 44). Ironically, it would soon be Lady Margaret and Lady Anne who were framed as agents of deferral; the women were positioned as preventing the resolution of a profitable financial settlement between their male relatives. In 1612, Francis Clifford offered his niece an *ex gratia* payment in return for her recognition of his ownership of the properties in Westmorland which the Court of Wards’ preliminary findings had ruled should legally have passed to Lady Anne on her father’s death. Lady Anne and her mother rejected this offer of a settlement outright, and in doing so positioned themselves as agents of delay. As Spence suggests, Lady Anne’s ‘obstruction and strength of will’ created her, in the eyes of her husband, who was keen to get his hands on an immediate cash settlement, as subversively deferring his economic satisfaction (Spence, 50). Thus Lady Anne is created

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<sup>12</sup> Clifford, *The Memoir of 1603 and the Diary of 1616-1619*, p. 111.

as a delaying obstacle. She is defined by delay as both a virgin and as a ‘postponed heiress’, and furthermore, by refusing to concede to pressure from both her uncle and her husband to accept her disinheritance, Lady Anne defines herself as a disobedient and delaying wife.

In the masques in which she performed with Queen Anna in 1608, 1609 and 1610, Lady Anne was a conduit for the dramatic presentation of women as subversively delaying men and masculine action both through female sexual vice and virginal virtue. Lady Anne danced in both Jonson’s *The Masque of Beauty* (1608) and *The Masque of Queens* (1609) and in Samuel Daniel’s *Tethys’ Festival* (1610). In light of the binary opposition which separates women as subversively delayed and delaying from men as authorised in their action, a binary which I have argued throughout this thesis lies at the heart of early modern patriarchal society, it is difficult *not* to read the masques of the early seventeenth century as presenting the female body as a subversive temporal diversion for the male dominated court. Female masquers are defined via the entertaining hiatus of the masque itself; they ‘delay’ men in the audience through the eroticised performances of sexual virtue and sexual vice. For example, *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) presented the women of Stuart court as an erotic diversion. As Clare McManus suggests of the impact of this masque, ‘blackness and the art of face-painting itself were held to imply a certain sexual voracity’, and the court questioned the virtue of the female performers of *Blackness* as a result.<sup>13</sup> The first masque Lady Anne appeared in, *The Masque of Beauty*, was written to counter the scandal produced by *Blackness*. In it, the King was presented as resolving the problematic blackness of the earlier masque and the sexual rapacity it implied: ‘Jonson had opposed the blackening Ethiopian sun to the cleansing power of James’s imperial light’ (McManus, 174-5). The transgressive female masquers of *Blackness* were represented as being drawn

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<sup>13</sup> Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance stage: Anna of Denmark and female masquing in the Stuart court (1590-1619)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 11.

to England by James and purified by his authority as a privileged spectator. In both of these masques, women are presented by Jonson to the King as an eroticised distraction; they delay the virtuous action of the male courtiers as both sexually available whores (*Blackness*) and sexually unobtainable virgins (*Beauty*). The distraction of the masque disrupts the linear progression of the monarch; James enjoyed the spectacle of the female courtiers in *The Masque of Beauty* so much that he demanded that the dances they performed were repeated (McManus, 19). The sexuality of female masquers is thus presented as subversively delaying both King and court.

However, masquing also provided the women of the Stuart court with a way to reject delay and to act, and thus to defend their virtue through that action. I suggest masques such as *The Masque of Beauty* empowered women as active agents, because '[e]ach masque was, loosely, a quest' and James was presented as the 'object of the masquer's search'.<sup>14</sup> Although Martin Butler suggests this positioning of James meant the masques were 'performative of the King's authority', I suggest that by presenting these women as actively striving to achieve their ends, these performances worked to empower those women as active agents (Butler, 'Private', 142). Masquing in one way empowered women by placing the female body at the centre of the court, and the masques can be read, Peter Holbrook suggests, as a celebration of 'Queen Anne's views on the worth and dignity of women'.<sup>15</sup> James was certainly the goal of Lady Anne's individual quest during the inheritance dispute, since achieving a prominent position at court was her only hope of securing the King's favourable arbitration. By performing for the King with the Queen, Lady Anne places herself as an active agent at the heart of the court which consistently

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<sup>14</sup> Martin Butler, 'Private and occasional drama', in *The Cambridge companion to English Renaissance drama*, ed. by A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 139-50 (p. 142).

<sup>15</sup> Peter Holbrook, 'Jacobean masques and the Jacobean peace', in *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*, ed. by David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 67-87 (p. 79).



worked to delay her on her mission to realise her inheritance. Lady Anne also performed in Daniel's *Tethys' Festival*, a masque which was written in order to celebrate the investiture of Prince Henry as Prince of Wales and to honour his position as heir to the throne. By performing in this masque, Lady Anne presumably hoped to come one step closer to the inheritance which is unproblematic for Henry, but which, as a woman, she is obliged to actively fight for.

Masques can be read as both contributing to the objectification of women in patriarchal society by exposing 'the spectacle of the female body [. . .] to the king's interpretive gaze', and also as championing female resistance to masculine control by presenting women as, for example, foreign Queens who 'are independent rulers, "subversive" of James' authority' (McManus, 117, Holbrook, 79). As I have illustrated, these contrasting impulses as expressed in the masques of the Stuart court can be read in terms of my consideration of gender as temporally constructed through negotiations of action and delay. Paradoxically, Lady Anne uses what I have described as the 'delayed' form of the masque – through which she is presented as a delaying obstacle to male fulfilment – in order to move closer to attaining her ultimate goal. As I shall now explore, in the events of 1615, as well as in the diaries of 1616, 1617 and 1619, we similarly see Lady Anne beginning to use the identities of delay on which her masquing experience had been based in order to act.

In 1615, three years after the Court of Wards had found in favour of Lady Anne's claims, the case to determine the rightful ownership of the lands finally began at the Common Pleas bar in Westminster Hall. Later that same year, the Court ruled in support of Lady Anne's claims on Westmorland, and ordered that Francis should pay compensation of £17,000 in return for his retention of those estates. This amount was to rise to £20,000 should she agree to pursue no further legal action. Once it was clear to Lady Anne that the

courts, despite acknowledging the validity of her claims, were set on siding with her uncle, she fell back on a strategy of delay which aimed at staving off what ultimately became the absolute alienation of her inheritance rights. While previously she had actively fought to have her claim recognised, she now withdrew, deferring any legal decision by refusing to engage with the arbitration process as managed by the King directly from 1616 onwards. The authorised delays of the legal process which had prevented her from inheriting between 1605 and 1615, were thus matched by the unauthorised delays of a willful and disobedient wife and subject from 1615 until Lady Anne finally received her inheritance in 1643.

At the start of her diary of 1616, the Court's proposed award had been issued, but Anne was yet to sign the agreement, which she would in fact never concede to do. Her diary details the intense pressure she was put under by her husband and friends to acknowledge the court's decision and accept the compensatory payment. An entry for February 1616 reads:

Upon the 17<sup>th</sup> [. . .] my Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, my Lord William Howard, my Lord Roos, my Cousin Russell, my Brother Sackville and a great company of men of note were all in the gallery at Dorset House where the Archbishop of Canterbury took me aside and talked with me privately one hour and a half and persuaded me both by divine and human means to set my hand to these arguments but my answer to his Lordship was that I would do nothing till my Lady and I had conferred together. Much persuasion was used by him and all the company, sometimes terrifying me and sometimes flattering me, but at length it was concluded that I should have leave to go to my Mother and send an answer by the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March next.

(Clifford, *Memoir*, 71)

Lady Anne maintains this strategy of passive resistance – she will not agree to the Archbishop's proposed settlement until she has spoken with her mother – in the face of pressure not only from the highest religious authority in the country and this group of 'men of note', but also from the King himself. Having been given leave to journey to the north and confer with her mother, Lady Anne sends a direct denial from Westmorland, before she

returns to London, and ultimately to Knole House on the 11<sup>th</sup> April, without the crucial legal documents which her husband was so keen for her to sign. ‘Upon the 12<sup>th</sup>’, she writes, ‘I told my Lord how I had left those writings which the Judges and my Lord would have me sign and seal behind with my mother’ (Clifford, *Memoir*, 77). Lady Anne passes no comment on this deliberate strategy of delay, but it is clear from this incident that she was capable of using her own tactics of deferral to take action against her disinheritance. As I have argued in Chapter 2, patience can define both passive inaction and active self-improvement simultaneously. Lady Anne’s use of the identity of the delaying patient wife as a tool for her active resistance of her disinheritance illustrates this.

The diaries of 1616 and 1617 present Lady Anne refusing to submit to the King’s arbitration in the dispute if it is to mean she loses the properties in Westmorland which were the focus of her inheritance claim. At the end of 1616, the King summons Lady Anne to return to London from Knole House. On the 18<sup>th</sup> January 1617, Lady Anne’s diary entry describes a private audience with the King:

He put out all that were there and my Lord and I kneeled by his chair side when he persuaded us both to peace and to put the whole matter wholly into his hands, which my Lord consented to, but I beseeched His Majesty to pardon me for that I would never part from Westmorland while I lived upon any condition whatsoever. Sometimes he used fair means and persuasions, and sometimes foul means but I was resolved before so as nothing would move me.

(Clifford, *Memoir*, 111)

Two days later, on the 20<sup>th</sup> January, Lady Anne again refuses to accept the King’s arbitration if it should mean, as ultimately it did, that she lost her Westmorland estates:

I was sent for up to the King into his drawing chamber when the door was locked and nobody suffered to stay here but my Lord and I, my Uncle Cumberland, my cousin Clifford, my Lords Arundel, my Lord of Pembroke, my Lord of Montgomery and Sir John Digby. For lawyers there were Lord Chief Justice Montagu and Hobart, Yelverton the King’s Solicitor, Sir Ranulphe Crew that was to speak for my Lord of Cumberland and Mr Ireland that was to speak for my Lord and me. The King asked us all whether we

would submit to his judgement in this case, to which my Uncle Cumberland, my cousin Clifford and my Lord answered they would, but I would never agree to it without Westmorland at which the King grew in a great chaff, my Lord of Pembroke and the King's solicitor speaking much against me. At last, when they saw there was no remedy, my Lord, fearing the King would do me some public disgrace, desired Sir John Digby to open the door, who went out with me and persuaded me much to yield to the King.

(Clifford, *Memoir*, 113-115)

Her incredible strength of conviction in the face of such pressure forces the King to rule that an agreement must be made without Lady Anne's consent. Spence suggests the King 'was not prepared to let Anne delay the ending of a controversy which had caused much dissension among his courtiers and in the north-west counties and in which the Crown had a vested interest' (Spence, 56). Lady Anne is positioned as a 'stumbling-block', who through her willful delay prevents a sensible financial transaction between her male relatives from being made (Spence, 56). Subsequently, the King's Award is made on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1617, which Lady Anne's uncle and husband immediately sign their names to. This award confirmed the Court's findings of 1615, recognising Lady Anne's claim on the Westmorland properties but ruling that Francis should continue in his possession of them and pay Lady Anne compensation. Thus the King put an end to what is described in the Award itself as the 'long and tedious suyts concernyng Which some have already depended many years and Which controversies have byn endeavoured to be ended both by tryall at the lawe by arbitrarrye Award of our Justices of our Court of Comon Please'.<sup>16</sup> Lady Anne's claims on the Westmorland properties, and her refusal to submit to the King's arbitration, were disregarded, and her inheritance was lost until 1643. Lady Anne has the delayed temporality of the 'postponed heiress' forced upon her, and yet her faith that her inheritance will inevitably be realised enables her to suffer the trials of that delay with patience and in

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<sup>16</sup> George Charles Williamson, ed., *Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke & Montgomery, 1590-1676, her life, letters and work, extracted from all the original documents available, many of which are here printed for the first time* (Kendall: T. Wilson & Son, 1922), p. 473.

fact use that delay to pose a direct challenge to the patriarchal authority which enforced it. She manages to turn delay to her advantage, not only by actively resisting the strategies for completion which her male relatives enforce, as I have suggested, but by casting herself in the role of patient wife.

iv      **‘I am like an owl in the desert’: the patient wife<sup>17</sup>**

I have suggested that delay is used to control Lady Anne as a virgin and as ‘postponed heiress’; her identity as a young woman is predicated on inaction, on passivity and on obedience. I have also argued that paradoxically that delay becomes the tool of resistance Lady Anne employs against her disempowerment. The passivity and inaction of the virgin actually frustrates male sexual satisfaction, in the same way that the passivity and inaction of Lady Anne as a ‘postponed heiress’ frustrates her husband and uncle’s economic satisfaction. Lady Anne employs an identity of delay to her advantage by simply refusing to perform as an obedient wife and subject in line with her husband and King’s wishes. However, she also uses an identity of delay in more subtle ways, by presenting herself as a patient wife married to a prodigal husband.

The fact that Lady Anne owned both an edition of Chaucer’s works containing the Griselda narrative and Jonson’s folio (littered as it is with variations on the patient wife / prodigal husband theme), taken together with her attendance at plays and masques at court, suggests that she would at least have been familiar with the figures of the patient wife and prodigal husband.<sup>18</sup> I argue in this section of the chapter that Lady Anne employs the identity of the patient wife – an identity circumscribed by delay – in order to posit an *active* challenge to the authority of her male relatives. Because she believes her disinheritance constitutes a delay which will be inevitably one day be concluded, as the delay constituted by her virginity was concluded with marriage, she is able to patiently endure the ‘trials’ her

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<sup>17</sup> Clifford, *The Memoir of 1603 and the Diary of 1616-1619*, p. 83.

<sup>18</sup> Editions of both Jonson and Chaucer’s works are visible on bookshelves behind Lady Anne in ‘The Great Picture’. Jonson’s spendthrift / prodigal types include Volpone and Edward in *Everyman In His Humour*. In *Epicoene or The Silent Woman*, Jonson parodies the character of the patient wife, who is revealed to be a young boy.

male relatives subject her to, and to create herself as, in effect, a morally superior Griselda figure.

Prodigality and patience are presented to Lady Anne via the temporally gendered identities of her mother (as patiently delayed) and father (as prodigally active). These identities are shaped by the intersection of the axes of gender and time which I have argued throughout this thesis were central to the creation of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century subjectivity. Lady Anne, I suggest, used the models presented to her by her parents, as well as by the literature and drama which she was exposed to as a young woman, in order to create herself as a patient wife married to a prodigal husband.

George Clifford had a high profile within the Elizabethan court, and was named the Queen's champion in 1590. He was a renowned adventurer, and travelled to 'Costa Rica, the Azores, the Canaries [and] the coasts of Spain and Portugal, with the frank intention of plundering such towns as he could reduce and taking captive such foreign merchantmen as he should encounter'.<sup>19</sup> He was commonly regarded as 'profligate and adulterous'; he left his wife and Lady Anne in order to live with his mistress (Clifford, *Memoir*, 11). In accordance with the identity of the prodigal, George Clifford's life was what Sackville-West describes as one dominated by 'adventure and absence' (Sackville-West, xii).

George Clifford's prodigality is matched by his wife's patience and his riotous living is evidenced in the letters which have survived between them. Lady Margaret, writing to her husband before their separation, seems to acknowledge the futility of requesting him to stay with her in the country: 'I assure myself it shall not allure your

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<sup>19</sup> Lady Anne Clifford, *The Diary of the Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. by Vita Sackville-West (London: William Heinemann, 1923), p. x.

Lordship to linger longer than likely'.<sup>20</sup> In a response to a request from Lady Margaret for a visit from her husband, he writes to her the following dismissal:

Time will make you leave those concerns for they will do no good  
with me. [. . .] Till then, reason would you should have patience,  
and not run courses to my discredit.

(Williamson, *George*, 299)

Lady Margaret presents an image of herself as deserted by her husband and as a victim of his riotous living. In a letter to an acquaintance identified as 'Doctor Layfield', Lady Margaret provides a formalised and detailed account of her life in seven ages. As part of that account, she describes her husband's prodigal privateering, and her isolation in the country:

In this mean time my Lord grew he acquaint himself [*sic*] with  
pleasant delights of court and exchang'd his country pleasures, with  
new thoughts of greater worlds. So home I came alone with my two  
sons, to Skipton, leaving my Lord at Court, where interchangeably  
he lost with many goings back and forwards and turnings many for  
the worse, but few for the better, till we had wasted our land and  
substance, which in hope of better fortune of the sea, than we had  
of the land, he ventur'd many thousands, which we saw come  
empty home.

(Williamson, *George*, 287)

This image of Lady Margaret as constant and patient in the face of her husband's extravagant lifestyle is further confirmed in a letter she writes to Lady Anne herself, in which she gives her daughter encouragement to hold out against pressure from her husband, telling her that 'the feminy ginger is much mor constannt then the marskilin' (Spence, 52). Women, she seems to advise Lady Anne, are naturally less flighty, less irresponsible and necessarily more patient than their prodigal husbands.

George Clifford fulfilled his role as prodigal by staging a final act conversion which aligned him with the prodigal husbands I examined in Chapter 3. Suffering from ill health

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<sup>20</sup> George Charles Williamson, *George, Third Earl of Cumberland (1558-1605), his life and his voyages. A study from original documents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p. 298.



in 1605, he was reconciled to the family he had abandoned. In a letter to his wife which he composed on his deathbed, George attempts to make amends for the riotous living which had defined him as both husband and father:

Thus, out of the bitter and greedy desire of a repentant heart  
begging thy pardon for any wrong that ever in my life I did thee, I  
commend these my requests to thy wonted and undeserved, kind  
wifely and lovely consideration, my body to God's disposing and  
my love to His merciful commiseration.

(Williams, *George*, 271)

Through his repentance, the prodigal George Clifford positions Lady Margaret as the long suffering patient wife of whom he must ultimately ask forgiveness.

As well as presenting *themselves* via the gendered temporal identities of patience and prodigality, critical and historical considerations of Lady Margaret and George Clifford's relationship also contribute to our understanding of them as figures polarised by gender and time. Martin Holmes, for example, describes the couple in the following passage:

Lady Cumberland's patient, careful disposition inclined her always to examine her circumstances and resources, make sure what they were and order her life accordingly. Her husband, on the other hand, was all for improving matters by bold, wild enterprises that were admittedly challenges to fortune.<sup>21</sup>

Margaret and George presented a model of a marital union between patience and prodigality which was becoming familiar on the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean stages, and which had a profound effect on the way Lady Anne wrote about her own marriage. In her diaries of 1616, 1617 and 1619, we see Lady Anne using the model of patience and prodigality as it had been presented to her through her parents' relationship in order to structure the presentation of her own marriage to Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset. Lady Anne's first husband is generally regarded by historians and critics as a 'spend-thrift and

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<sup>21</sup> Martin Holmes, *Proud northern lady: Lady Anne Clifford, 1590-1676* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1975), p. 4.

prodigal' who wanted his wife to 'renounce her rights or certain of her rights in consideration of a compromise for ready cash' (Sackville-West, xxix). Vita Sackville-West writes that Dorset was friends with Prince Henry, that he was 'addicted like him to tilting, bowling, cock-fighting, gambling and masqueing' and that he was 'conspicuous for his fine clothes, his lavish housekeeping, and his general extravagance' (Sackville-West, xxxii). He squanders his money on 'hospitality, women, gaming' and is, for Sackville-West 'the first wastrel of a family which was to become notorious for its prodigality' (Sackville-West, xxxii).

Lady Anne writes about her first husband with some affection in later life, but in the *Life of Me*, she is also keen to point out his faults, particularly his 'profuseness in consuming his estate' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 225). In her diaries of 1616, 1617, and 1619 she confirms the image of prodigality her biographers and editors attribute to her first husband. Lady Anne presents Dorset as, like her father, prodigal both in his absence and in his profligate spending. In a letter to her mother in 1615, Lady Anne writes: 'My Lord doth grow much in debt, so as money is not so plentiful with me as it hath been' (Williamson, *Anne*, 148). His prodigal spending necessitated Dorset's absence from the marital home. He generally kept Lady Anne at Knole House in Kent, or in the north, whilst he, her diary of 1616 reveals,

went much abroad to cocking, to bowling alleys, to plays and horse races and was commended by all the world. I stayed in the country having many times a sorrowful and heavy heart, and being condemned by most folks because I would not consent to the agreements, so as I may truly say I am like an owl in the desert  
(Clifford, *Memoir*, 83)

Lady Anne positions her husband as a prodigal, and interestingly links his play-going to that prodigality. This image of Dorset's prodigality is consistent throughout Lady Anne's

writings. In a letter to her mother dated 20<sup>th</sup> January 1616, the abuse of his prodigal absence is made clear:

The time draws on apace, and my Lord is more and more earnest with me to make a final end of this business of my uncle of Cumberland, and persists that, if I do it not, he will go into France and leave me, so that I am now in a narrow strait, and know not which way to turn myself [. . .] I will do nothing without your Ladyship's knowledge, therefore I beseech you, let me know your resolution as soon as possibly you may.

(Williamson, *Anne*, 153)

Lady Anne presents herself in 1616, isolated at Knole House whilst her husband enjoyed the life of an eminent courtier in London, whilst threatening the possibility of his future desertion to France. She is long-suffering patient wife, the 'owl in the desert' of Psalm 102, whom he abandons.

Lady Anne's paints a moving picture of her existence as deserted wife, telling us in April 1616 that '[a]bout this time I used to rise early in the morning and go to the standing in the garden and taking my prayer book with me and beseech God to be merciful to me and to help me in this as He always hath done' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 77). This image of a pious Lady Anne, alone in the garden with her prayer book, is accompanied by other images of her lonely existence at Knole. In March, she tells us that '[t]his day (17<sup>th</sup>) I made an end of my Lady's book in praise of a Solitary Life' and a few days later she tells us that 'after supper I fell into a great passion of weeping in my chamber' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 163).

The whole diary is littered with bleak accounts of her isolation. One event in particular links her directly with the ultimate patient wife, Griselda. In May 1616, Lady Anne writes that '[u]pon the 3<sup>rd</sup> came Basket [Dorset's servant] down from London and brought me a letter from my Lord by which I might see it was his pleasure that the Child should go the next day to London' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 79). She comments that she 'wept bitterly' at this order from her husband, and the next day, having parted from her daughter,

describes herself as 'being in the midst of all my misery' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 79). Six days after this incident, Lady Anne reports that '[a]t night was brought me a letter from my Lord to let me know that his determination was the Child should go live at Horsely and not come hither anymore, so this was a grievous and sorrowful day to me' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 79). Following this incident, Lady Anne would not see her two-year-old daughter for over seven months, during which time her own mother died. She remained in mourning, alone in the north, whilst the young Lady Margaret was kept with her father's family in the south. Lady Anne wanted to visit her daughter, but in October writes that 'Rivers [Dorset's servant] [came] down to Brougham and brought me word that I could not go to London all this winter' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 99). This cruel separation from her child was intended not to test Lady Anne's patience, but to force her to concede to accepting the King's arbitration and Francis' proposed compensatory award. Unlike the Marquess of the Griselda legend, Dorset is not interested in proving his wife's virtue, but he does employ the same strategies of isolation and delay in his attempts to realise her fortune.

When she is allowed to join Dorset in town, Lady Anne continues to present herself as occupying a liminal position within court society. She is prevented from participating in seasonal celebrations, and is confined instead to her own room for days on end. In diary entries such as that for the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1616, we get a sense of her feelings of social isolation: 'Upon New Year's Day I kept my Chamber all the day, my Lady Rich and my sister Sackville dining with me, but my Lord and all the company at Dorset House went to see the masque at the Court' (Clifford, *Memoir*, 63). Thus the masques which Clifford linked to the scandalised court of Queen Anna in 1603 are here used as an index of her husband's prodigality.

Paradoxically, it is, I suggest, through attending and reading masques and plays *herself* that Lady Anne becomes versed in the models of patience and prodigality which she

uses to condemn her husband. Her performance in Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* in 1609 would have provided her with a clear enough template for patient delay. In this masque, Lady Anne was presented as 'fair-haired Berenicè, Egypt's fame' who awaits the return of her absent lord: 'This lady, upon an expedition of her new-wedded lord into Assyria, vowed to Venus, if he returned safe and conqueror, the offering of her hair'.<sup>22</sup> Like the other Queens of this masque, Lady Anne is figured as living 'eternized in the House of Fame': their virtue is temporally figured as immortal (Lindley, 45). The witches who constitute the anti-masque, on the other hand, are presented as temporally rapacious; the charms they invoke to summon their Dame repeatedly bid her to '[q]uickly come', and the dame herself is fixated on hasty completion: 'Darkness, devils, night and hell | Do not thus delay my spell' (Lindley, 36, 42). This temporal presentation of a noble and virtuous woman as patient and enduring – and deserted by an absent husband – must have had some resonances for Lady Anne.

In her diaries, she mentions watching three masques at court in addition to the three we know she performed in; although Acheson tells us that one of these masques remains unidentified, the other two were possibly Jonson's *The Golden Age Restored* (1615-1616) and *The Vision of Delight* (1617) (Clifford, *Memoir*, 65, 109, 155). Furthermore, she records both watching an unidentified play in 1616 at Lady Shrewsbury's house, and seeing a performance by the King's Men of Fletcher's *The Mad Lover* (1617) at court (Clifford, *Memoir*, 63, 109). These records of her spectatorship suggest Lady Anne would have been consistently exposed to a variety of prodigal and patient dramatic types as an aristocratic lady in the court of James VI and I. *The Mad Lover* in particular presents characters who are temporally defined. Memnon, the eponymous mad lover, returns to Paphos to a hero's

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<sup>22</sup> David Lindley, ed., *Court masques: Jacobean and Caroline entertainments, 1605-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 45, 48. For Inigo Jones' design for Lady Anne's masquing costume, see Appendix Figure 7.

welcome, having been away at war for twenty-five years. Having achieved what he calls the 'lazier end' of 'Peace', Memnon feels out of place amongst the nobility.<sup>23</sup> 'I know no Court but Marshall', he tells the King, '[n]o oylie language, but the shock of Armes' (1.1.61-2). The passivity of peacetime is, for Memnon and the other returning soldiers of the play, an unwelcome delay of valiant action. Memnon is, however, dumbstruck when he sees Calis, the King's sister, for the first time: '*He kneeles, amaz'd, and forgets to speak*' (1.1.108SD). His thoughts of war are quickly banished as he runs mad with love for Calis: he offers to cut out his heart for her and orders his men to join with him in a suicide pact. In this play the valiant action of men at war is contrasted with the intemperance – the madness – of men at peace. That madness manifests through both the discourses of Petrarchan love and, I suggest, of prodigality. Both Memnon and another soldier, Syphax, present themselves as Petrarchan lovers, and I suggest that their rashness in love is framed by a prodigal intemperance: Memnon bids the surgeon cut his heart with the words 'quick, quick', and Syphax, also pining for Calis, asks his sister to 'worke speedilie' in her plots to win the princess for him. The delay of peacetime is presented as a 'bastard breeding lowzie, lazier idleness': the soldiers at the court of Paphos, who we see cavorting with whores, are corrupted by riotous living (1.1.227). Thus in this play, the actions of war are honourable, whereas the interim of peace as a delay encourages the dishonourable actions of prodigality.

Calis, however, rejects both Memnon and Syphax. She is in love with Memnon's brother, Polidor. The King is made aware of this predicament – Calis will die without Polidor, Memnon will kill himself for Calis – and decides to act as arbiter of the dispute.

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<sup>23</sup> John Fletcher, *The Mad Lover*, ed. by Robert Kean Turner, in *The dramatic works in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), V, 1.1.52.



Acheson suggests that ‘what Clifford would later characterise as a profoundly isolated life was intensely social’ (Clifford, *Memoir*, 26). I agree with this evaluation; as I will explore later, Lady Anne does indeed become more conscious of her image as abused, isolated and delayed heiress once she has come into her inheritance. This is apparent in the *Life of Me* and her later autobiographical works, which recast the miseries of her youth as a providentially ordained delay. However, I argue that there is also plenty of evidence in the 1616, 1617 and 1619 diaries, as I have illustrated, to suggest that Lady Anne was *already* consciously crafting an identity for herself as the patient wife of a prodigal husband before the realisation of her inheritance in 1643. Through the identity of the patient wife, her disinheritance is defined as a delay *before* the death of her cousin which defines it as such. Her suffering as a young woman is not simply retrospectively defined as a delay once she realises her inheritance; through the identity of the patient wife, Lady Anne defines herself as delayed before she can possibly know that the trials she suffers with patience will one day be rewarded.

The identity of the patient wife, although in many ways restrictive and debilitating, is also empowering, as it both enables Lady Anne to endure with hope, as I have suggested, and to position herself as morally superior to her husband, as we see her doing time and time again in her works. Lady Anne’s self-fashioning as a Patient Griselda / Berenicè figure ultimately enables her to use delay against those who delay her. Delay becomes her only tool for opposition, as well as being her oppressors’ tool of dominance. She uses her isolation to create an identity for herself as the ‘postponed heiress’ and patient wife, both in the years of the dispute running up to the declaration of the King’s Award, and after the confirmation of her disinheritance.

Lady Anne uses the delayed identity of the patient wife to her own advantage. She presents her disobedience – her refusal to accept the King’s award which threatens to label



her as a shrew – as the authorised response of a patient wife attempting to endure the cruel trials of a tyrant husband. Her willful refusal to concede to the authority of her male relatives is repositioned in her diaries as the passive suffering which defines the virtuous patient wife on the early modern stage. Thus through an identity of delay, Lady Anne is in fact empowered to act and to actively resist her disinheritance. However, ultimately, the identity of the patient wife Lady Anne creates for herself must be sustained for many years before she is able to reap the benefits of her forbearance. As a woman, Lady Anne cannot seize her inheritance either before it is due like the prodigal son or even *when* it is due. She simply must wait.

Lady Anne draws on her father's words to her on his deathbed, her faith in her rights as a 'postponed heiress', and the identity of the patient wife as it had been made familiar to her by her mother and by the theatrical performances and texts of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean court to which she was exposed, in order to sustain hope in the eventual recognition of her inheritance. This hope is born of the experience of delay which paradoxically also works to disempower her. A delay is only created as such once it has been concluded, therefore by positioning herself as delayed, Lady Anne simultaneously defines herself as powerless, and yet also expresses her faith in the conclusion of that delay which will create her as a wealthy heiress. It is the reward of that faith, a faith through which Lady Anne seeks her own brand of passive 'revenge', that is celebrated as I shall now explore, in the memoir of 1652, 'The Great Picture' which she commissioned to mark the realisation of her inheritance and in the diary of her last year, 1676.

The identities of the patient wife, the prodigal husband and the revenging son are, as I have explored in this thesis, defined via periods of delay. The temporal liminality of these characters is concluded when the delays which structure their lives are inevitably resolved; the patient wife is reinstated as wife and mother, the prodigal husband repents and is forgiven, and the revenger is condemned when his or her vengeful mission is achieved. However, the ending which is signified by Lady Anne’s realisation of her long awaited inheritance is actually the *beginning* of her enjoyment of thirty-three years as an empowered heiress. When Lady Anne is finally acknowledged as the rightful heir of her father’s estates in the north of England at the age of fifty-three, she is able to confirm the divinely ordained nature of her past suffering and assert herself not as a passive wife, but as an active, wealthy and socially legitimised widow, mother and grandmother.

Lady Anne positions the delay of her inheritance as providentially ordained in her memoir from 1652, the *Life of Me*. As a pious Christian, but perhaps even more importantly, as a woman, Lady Anne has no choice but to leave revenge to God, and God does not fail her; the enemies she often writes about in her later life – specifically her uncle and her cousin – are removed via what Lady Anne defines as divine retribution. Her patience is rewarded; the death of her cousin, which both confirms the delayed nature of her existence between 1605 and 1643 and simultaneously concludes that period of delay, ultimately confirms what she presents as her providentially orchestrated marital and financial independence.

An extract from the *Life of Me* reveals Lady Anne, in her early 60s, now twice widowed and in possession of her properties in the north, reflecting on the day of her disinheritance:

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1617, as the year begins on New Year's Day, I was brought before King James in Whitehall to give my consent to the award, which he then intended to make, and did afterwards perform, concerning all the lands of mine inheritance; which I utterly refused, and was thereby afterwards brought to many and great troubles. But notwithstanding my refusal, the 14<sup>th</sup> March following, at which time the said King James took his journey toward Scotland, did my said lord sign and seal that award in Great Dorset House, by which he resigned to Francis, Earl of Cumberland and Henry, Lord Clifford, his son, and to their heirs male, all his right in the lands of mine inheritance; which brought many troubles upon me, the most part of the time after that I lived his wife; but notwithstanding those great and innumerable difficulties and oppositions God protected and enabled me to pass through them all. *Psalms* 32:8; *Isaiah* 30:21; *Jeremiah* 42:3; *Psalms* 71.

(Clifford, *Memoir*, 229)

Lady Anne expresses indignation at her disinheritance and yet also her faith in God's providence, which at the time of writing she believed had finally delivered her lands to her. This retrospective position – writing from a time when she has finally inherited her lands, about a time when she must have been fairly certain that she would never inherit them – enables her to have faith in God's providence. Throughout the *Life of Me*, Lady Anne continually presents the circumstances of her life as divinely ordained. The memoir begins with the assertion that 'I was, through the mercifull providence of God, begotten by my valiant father, and conceived with child by my worthy mother, the first day of May in 1589'.<sup>24</sup> She describes 'an attempt of my enemies to have robbed me', in later life, from which she tells us she 'escaped miraculously by God's providence' (Gilson, 47). Faith in God's master plan is frequently referenced in relation to the inheritance dispute. Writing about her brother-in-law, Sir Edward Sackville, whom sided with Dorset in the dispute and whom as a result she frequently came up against as an opponent to her inheritance claims, Lady Anne writes 'I, whose destiny was guided by a merciful and divine providence,

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<sup>24</sup> J. P. Gilson, ed., *Lives of Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery (1590-1676) and of her Parents, Summarized by Herself* (London: The Roxburghe Club, 1916), p. 33.

escaped the subtlety of all his practices, and the evils which he plotted against me’  
(Clifford, *Memoir*, 230).

Her obsession with coincidences, which she frequently seeks to identify by making temporal and spatial connections between the key events of her life, similarly suggests a driving desire to, as Mary Lamb suggests, ‘convey a sense of overarching order’ in her life.<sup>25</sup> It is important for her in 1652, as it is increasingly so in the diary of 1676, to highlight the arbitrary connections which she believes strengthen her claim to a divinely ordained existence and most importantly, her claim to her inheritance. For example, on her second marriage, to Phillip Herbert, fourth Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, Lady Anne comments that

This second marriage of mine was wonderfully brought to pass by the Providence of God, for the crossing and disappointing the envy, malice and sinister practices of my enemies [. . .] And methinks it is remarkable I should be this second time married in ye church of Cheneys, in the vault whereof lye interred my great-grandfather and grandfather of Bedford and their wives.

(Gilson, 49)

It is the time between these coincidentally linked moments which creates their mutually informed significance, and in the same way, it is the time between Lady Anne’s disinheritance in 1605, and her inheritance in 1643 – the delay which defines a huge portion of her life – which becomes most significant to her self-fashioning as an empowered heiress.

This in between time is perhaps most strikingly presented in the painting Lady Anne commissioned and which was completed in 1646 to commemorate her inheritance, known as ‘The Great Picture’.<sup>26</sup> This painting is as much an autobiographical text as Lady Anne’s diaries, chronicles and memoirs, and her trust in providence and reliance on delay as a

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<sup>25</sup> Mary Lamb, ‘The Agency of the Split Subject: Lady Anne Clifford and the Uses of Reading’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 22.3 (1992), 347-68 (p. 358).

<sup>26</sup> Katherine Acheson dates the painting to 1646 (Clifford, *Memoir*, 211).

strategy of resistance can be read in the picture in the same way they can be tracked through her writings. Possibly by Jan van Belcamp, the picture depicts in three panels, from left to right: Lady Anne as a girl of fifteen in 1605, the year of her disinheritance; Lady Anne's mother (with Lady Anne possibly *in utero*) and father with her two brothers, Robert and Francis, both of whom died in infancy; and Lady Anne at the moment of composition, in 1646, by which time she had officially come into her inheritance [Appendix Figure 6].

The portrait positions the hiatus of her disinheritance as a period of deferral which is divinely and rightfully concluded, reconfiguring the linear arc of experience Aristotle describes through his theory of the three ages of man in line with Lady Anne's own experiences of delay. Reading the portrait from left to right (in accordance with the stages of growth, stasis and decay Aristotle defines and which are presented by the arced formation of the figures represented), conventionally positions Lady Anne's period of 'growth' in the left hand panel, as represented by her fifteen-year-old scholarly self. Her 'stasis', however, is unconventionally communicated by the absence which is the gap of forty-one years between the left hand panel and the right hand panel. In the moment which is meant to signify Lady Anne at the apex of her achievement, she is noticeably absent from the central family group. Similarly unconventionally, her period of 'decay' begins with the right hand panel, ironically the only panel in which, as a sitter, she is actually present, and which in reality marks a *beginning* for Lady Anne as an heiress in possession of her inheritance. Thus 'The Great Picture' reshapes the three ages of man in line with Lady Anne's own temporal reality, which is dominated by the delay of her inheritance. The delay which is represented by her absence from the central panel is positioned as defining Lady Anne at the pinnacle of her maturation; it is through this delay that she wreaks her revenge and comes into her inheritance. Unlike the revengers of the Jacobean stage, by waiting and putting her faith in God's retributive justice, Lady Anne achieves her ultimate goal without

spilling a drop of blood. 'The Great Picture' is, in a way, a celebration of her delay, a delay for which she is ultimately rewarded and which secures her identity as a wealthy and independent widow.

'The Great Picture' communicates Lady Anne's new found agency as a prominent member of the aristocracy. She no longer performs in entertainments written by men: she is in control of her self-representation and does not need to strive to win the monarch's favour. This conscious recognition of her new found social power is most strikingly evident and most frankly presented in the diary of her last three months. From the 1<sup>st</sup> January to the 21<sup>st</sup> March 1671, Lady Anne dictated a detailed account of her last days from her private chamber in Brougham Castle. Every entry for these three months ends with variations of the same solemn pronouncement: 'I went not out of ye House nor out of my chamber all this day', however, the isolation that this bed-ridden old lady describes is itself empowering, and very different from that she experienced as a socially marginalised young woman, weeping alone in her chamber in 1616.<sup>27</sup> In her ailing health, and confined to her room, Lady Anne is the constant centre around which a world of her own creating and over which she continues to command, revolves.

At the age of eighty-six, Lady Anne had celebrated the births of seventeen grandchildren, twelve of whom had survived and gone on to bear nineteen great-grandchildren. In addition to visits from these relatives, she has over thirty visits from farmers, schoolmasters, parsons, tailors, attorneys, Lords, Ladies, Knights, stewards, Quakers and herdsman in March alone, all of whom dine with her 'folks', those who constitute her large household, in the 'Painted Room', before paying their respects to Lady Anne herself in her private chamber (Clifford, *Diaries*, 267). There are only two dates, in

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<sup>27</sup> Lady Anne Clifford, *The diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, ed. by D. J. H. Clifford, 2nd edn (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), p. 267.

fact, out of all the entries of the 1676 diary, when there are no visitors to Brougham castle. 'And this day there was none that dined here or visited me', she writes on the 24<sup>th</sup> January, and similarly, just five days before her death, on the 17<sup>th</sup> March, she comments that 'today no body dined here but my owne folks, so that there is none to be superadded' (Clifford, *Diaries*, 251, 279). Many of those who visit Lady Anne receive payment for goods or services rendered. She hands over money on the receipt of portraits of her grandchildren, maps of her estates, barrels of beer and pillowcases, and she in turn gives away countless pairs of '[b]uckskin Gloves' to those who pay their respects in her last days (Clifford, *Diaries*, 243). It is clear from her diary, then, that Lady Anne in 1676 is still in control of the day-to-day running of her various estates, and has become the kind of empowered economic agent she could only have dreamed of being in 1617, the year of her disinheritance.

Lady Anne describes receiving and writing countless letters to and from her many relatives during this three month period. She positions herself as a central figure confined to a single room yet connected to the entire world, around whom events fan out both in the local, national and international arenas. Through her correspondence she keeps abreast of news both from London and from the continent. In her entry for the 4<sup>th</sup> January, she reveals one of her sources: 'And by the [*London*] *Gazette* this day received by the post from London I came to know that the Danes had taken Wismar from the Swedes, and the King by his proclamation doth forbid all coffee houses or the selling of coffee publickly' (Clifford, *Diaries*, 240). Yet juxtaposed with her accounts of foreign and urban affairs, we are given the details of her day-to-day physical ablutions in intimate detail:

And this 22<sup>nd</sup> day in ye morning, before I was out of my Bed, did I pare off ye topps of ye nails of all my fingers & toes, and when I was upp out of bed I burnt them in ye fire in ye chimney in my chamber.

(Clifford, *Diaries*, 267)

Through this uncompromising account of her bodily rituals, we realise that ironically it is at the end of her life when she is most physically fallible that she attains the social centrality and authority she had always believed was rightfully hers.

As well as being connected, via her correspondence and her visitors, synchronically through space in ever increasing circles emanating from the confines of her own room, Lady Anne connects herself diachronically through time to her own past, and to the past events which shaped her life. Readers of the diary are bombarded with Lady Anne's highly detailed memories of and reflections on the key events of her younger days. Interspersed with accounts of her visitors, her health, of letters written and payments made, there are fifty-five memories of her former life described in the three months of the 1676 diary. Countless entries begin 'I remembered how this day was X years since'. This diary, similar in form to those of 1616, 1617 and 1619, is in fact very different from those earlier accounts in its constant references to the past. The earlier diaries contain very limited references outside the 'present' moment. There are only two references I can identify which reveal Lady Anne thinking diachronically in the 1616, 1617 and 1619 diaries. On one occasion, she remembers her dead mother when visiting the house she used to live in. On another occasion, she asks Dorset to stay with her in Knole in order to celebrate their ten year wedding anniversary. Other than these references, there are a handful of marginal comments which provide a temporal context for past events remembered. In 1676, however, and perhaps not surprisingly considering Lady Anne's great age, practically every day of the calendar inspires a nostalgic memory and every event from the past requires a commemorative write-up in the present. Just looking at these memories on a statistical level tells us a lot about how Lady Anne created her identity through reading and writing throughout her life, and how her changing relationship with the binary opposition of action and delay effected the shaping of that identity.



Of the fifty-five memories Lady Anne records in the 1676 diary, fifty-one of them relate directly to her own life and just four of them reflect on non-personal events such as the Essex rebellion of 1601 and Princess Elizabeth's wedding in 1613. In total, Lady Anne remembers events from fifteen different years, spanning a total of eighty-five years, and ranging from the year of her birth in 1590, which she, of course, 'considers' rather than remembers, to the year prior to her writing, 1675. Interestingly, this 'epic sweep of temporal registers' does not include any memories from the years between 1624, when her first husband died, and 1649, the year of Charles I's execution, but perhaps of more relevance, the year she finally took possession of her inheritance in the north.<sup>28</sup> It is tempting to speculate that her silence on these years is due to a lack of source material which would have helped her remember events – the chronicles which began in 1650 are extant today, whereas there are no diaries or chronicles extant between 1619 and 1649. However, Lady Anne could well have been in possession of both serial diaries and chronicles for these years, which have since been lost. In support of this theory of lost source material, we should remember that despite there being no extant sources for the period 1619 to 1624, Lady Anne still cites seven memories from that period. It is possible to argue that Lady Anne *chooses* not to recall events in this twenty-five year period for a reason. It is the period of her delayed inheritance between her first widowhood and her ultimate restoration as heiress in 1649. She does not reflect on those bleak years of frustrated delay, which are so central to 'The Great Picture', but instead, channels most of her powers of remembrance into an earlier period of her life, the years of the inheritance dispute: 1616 and 1617. Whereas delay is prominent in 'The Great Picture', in her last

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<sup>28</sup> Megan Matchinske, 'Serial Identity: History, Gender, and Form in the Diary Writing of Lady Anne Clifford', in *Genre and women's life writing in early modern England*, ed. by Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 65-80 (p. 66).

months, the hiatus which defined such a huge portion of her life is now out of focus. Over sixty per cent of all the memories Lady Anne records in her last three months reflect on events in these two years. There are eighteen memories of events in 1616, and fifteen memories of events in 1617. All other years have just one or two memories relating to them, excepting 1590, the year of her birth, which has four ‘considerations’, and 1624, the year of Dorset’s death, which is similarly recalled four times.

So, it seems clear that the years of the inheritance dispute, 1616 and 1617, are of the utmost important to Lady Anne in her old age. I have been arguing throughout this coda that Lady Anne constructed her identity around the issue of her delayed inheritance. But what had become most important to her in 1676 was not the *realisation* of that inheritance (there are no memories from 1643 when her cousin Henry died and the estates were officially transferred to her as heir general, and none of her first trips to the north in 1649), but her fight for it. This is apparent if we look at the pattern her memories take across the 1676 diary. In January 1676, she reflects on January 1617, when she officially rejected the King’s proposed arbitration:

The 18<sup>th</sup> day I remembered how this day was 59 years (since) I went with my first Lord, Richard Earle of Dorset, before King James, into his Inner Drawing Chamber at Whitehall where ye King earnestly desired mee to subscribe to an award which hee intended to make betwixt mee & my said Lord on the one part, & my Uncle of Cumberland & his Son Henry Lord Clifford on the other part, concerning the lands of my antient Inheritance in Craven & Westmerland. But (by God’s Grace) I began to deny it, it being the first time I was ever before the King.

(Clifford, *Diaries*, 247)

Two days later, Lady Anne recalls her second denial of the King’s demand for her cooperation:

The 20<sup>th</sup> day. I remembered how this day was 59 years [since] I went with my first Lord to the Court at Whitehall, where in the inner withdrawing chamber King James desired & urged mee to submitt to the Award which hee would make concerning my Lands

of Inheritance, but I absolutely denied to do so, wherein I was  
guided by great Providence of God for the good of mee & mine.  
(Clifford, *Diaries*, 248)

Her memories then take a retrograde step. In February 1676, instead of continuing chronologically to remember her disinheritance on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1617, she jumps back and details her memories of February and March 1616. She remembers her trip to visit her mother in north and their subsequent refusal to accept the King's award, which is one of her final memories, recalled on March 20<sup>th</sup>:

The 20<sup>th</sup> Day. I remembered how this day was 60 years [since] I  
and my blessed Mother in Brougham Castle in Westmorland,  
where wee then lay, give in our answer in writing that we would  
not stand to the Award the then four cheif [*sic*] Judges meant to  
make concerning the lands of mine Inheritance, which did spin out  
a great deal of trouble to us

(Clifford, *Diaries*, 280)

In her last days, Lady Anne recalls the defining moment in her struggle to secure her inheritance. It is her refusal to accept her disinheritance, rather than the day on which the King overruled her objections and pronounced his Award, that it seems is of most importance to Lady Anne as she contemplates death. The rhetoric with which she writes herself has shifted. She is no longer focused on creating an identity of patience and forbearance – an identity of delay – which is presented in her diaries of 1616, 1617 and 1619, in memoir of 1652 and in 'The Great Picture'. Providence is referenced far less often in these last months than it is, as I have suggested, in the *Life of Me*. In her extreme old age, she remembers the fight she put up against her disinheritance and the action she took to prevent it, rather than the thirty-eight years of waiting which 'providence' forced her to endure before that inheritance was realised.

## Conclusion

Clearly, the theatre was not in the forefront of Lady Anne's mind when she wrote her memoirs. But I have argued that the events of 1616-17 – which included both the major events of her disinheritation and, as we know, her regular attendance at masques and plays – form the driving force of her later remembering. There is, it needs to be acknowledged, no direct evidence of the influence of the theatre and theatrical stereotypes upon her thinking. However her life-writings arguably present a series of negotiations of questions of gender and of time, and the gendered identity she figures for herself is shaped by the binary opposition of action and delay which I have suggested throughout this thesis structures the dramatic identities of wives and husbands on the early modern stage. Looking back, Lady Anne shapes her life in the way that Jacobean playwrights shaped the fictional lives of their characters, on the basis of stereotypes of patience, prodigality and revenge and on the trials and advantages of deferral. In so doing, she carried to the latter end of the seventeenth century the memory of the ways in which those playwrights shaped the Jacobean world for their audiences.

## Conclusion

Echoes are delayed returns of sound; they are incomplete reproductions, usually giving back only the final fragments of a phrase. An echo spans large gaps of space (sound reverberates between distant points) and time (echoes aren't instantaneous), but it also creates gaps of meaning and intelligibility.<sup>1</sup>

I begin the conclusion of this thesis with Joan W. Scott's consideration of the echo as a temporal construct, and I use it to suggest that the echo is dependent on the same dual temporality which, throughout this thesis, I have argued structures the concepts of patience, prodigality and revenge in early modern theatre and culture. The echo is active in that it charts a linear progression of meaning into the future away from an original source; as Scott suggests, 'the return of partial phrases alters the original sense and comments on it as well' (Scott, 291). The echo for Scott is also passive – 'incomplete, belated' – in that it is fundamentally premised on repetition, on return and on cyclicity; it is born of a necessary delay, an inescapable in-between time, which drags it back into the past (Scott, 291). As my analysis of early modern theatre and culture has shown, patience, prodigality and revenge are concepts which are similarly predicated on this kind of dual temporality, concepts defined simultaneously by waiting and not waiting, by action and delay. Furthermore, the concepts of action and delay are themselves premised on a kind of double-time: actions can delay and delays can be active. Scott suggests it is the dual temporality of the echo which exposes the 'gaps of meaning and intelligibility' in the 'notion of enduring sameness that often attaches to identity' (Scott, 291). Similarly, as I have argued throughout this thesis, the dual temporalities of patience, prodigality and revenge work to expose 'gaps of meaning and intelligibility' by multiplying and therefore deconstructing the simple binary oppositions of

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<sup>1</sup> Joan W. Scott, 'Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity', *Critical Inquiry*, 27.2 (2001), 284-304 (p. 291).

male / female and of action / delay on the early modern stage. Throughout this thesis, I have illustrated the ways in which the dual temporalities of patience, prodigality and revenge are apparent in the drama of the early modern period. To conclude, I would like to illustrate how that dual temporality, and the challenge to temporal and gendered binary distinctions I suggest it makes, is made evident by the echo as a specific dramatic device.

In *Patient Grissill*, considered in Chapter 2, the Marquess expresses his dislike of the sycophantic courtier Mario, who is willing to agree with anything he says, even if that means suggesting the Marquess' own child bears little resemblance to its father. Inspecting the child with Mario, the Marquess states that he is 'not halfe so browne' as his son (F4r). Mario agrees: 'Indeed your cheekes beare a more liuely colour' (F4r). When Mario exits, the Marquess expresses his disgust at this display of obsequiousness '[r]un flatterie, because I did blaspheme and cal it browne, | This Parrasite cride (like an Eccho) browne' (F4v). Mario's strategy of repetition is thus figured as sterile and false, yet it is through this repetition, or rather, this echo, that he hopes to improve his social status by winning favour with the Marquess. Thus the echo the Marquess describes reflects the dual temporality of patience itself, which, as I argue in Chapter 2, is simultaneously defined by a passive denial of action and by the actions of self-improvement which were increasingly at issue in the nascent capitalist society of early modern England. As a result of this dual temporality as it is presented via the image of the echo, the gendered and temporal binaries of the plays considered in Chapter 2 are confused and ultimately exposed as inherently unstable: patient wives and patient husbands are valued both for the passivity of their delayed inaction and yet also ultimately for the action which defines their quest for the moral improvement of their subversive spouses.

George Gascoigne's prodigal play, *The glasse of gouernment*, presents a character by the name of 'Eccho' who is, like Mario of *Patient Grissill*, described as a parasite.

Whereas Mario is a sycophantic social climber, however, Eccho keeps company with Lamia the harlot, and with her seems solely focused not on his own advancement but on disrupting the pious education – and the acquisition of social authority that education promises – of two brothers. Eccho thus expresses the dual temporality which defines prodigality: he is both active in enticing the brothers to leave their studies and yet also operates via delay in that, by leading them astray, he defers their authorised maturation as honourable young men. The action of prodigal riotous living, the character of Eccho seems to suggest, is paradoxically defined as a period of sterile and repetitive delay. This dual temporality destabilises the gendering of prodigal sons, who are condemned as effeminate in their immaturity by both their delay and by the sexually subversive action which defines that delay, as I have explored in Chapter 3.

Revenge as it is presented in the early modern theatre is fundamentally structured by both patiently waiting and prodigally acting. As I explored in Chapter 4, this dual temporality destabilises the gendering of revenging characters on the early modern stage and that instability is in turn manifest in the multiple echo images to be found in these plays. In *Titus Andronicus*, for example, the ‘babbling echo’ of the hunt ‘mocks the hounds [. . .] as if a double hunt were heard at once’ (2.3.17 & 19). To Tamora’s glee, the dual temporality of the echo confuses the distinction between here and there, then and now, in the Roman forest, enabling her to occupy the roles of both female agent of subversive delay in her ‘seduction’ of Aaron, and masculine agent of active and impetuous revenge, as expressed by her desire to kill Lavinia in the instant. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the echo which liberates Tamora is, on one level, presented as sterile in its repetition. The Duchess states, in response to Antonio’s concerns about their handfasting and his desire to solemnise their wedding, ‘[h]ow can the church bind faster? | We are now man and wife, and ’tis the church | That must but echo this’ (1.1.491-3). However, conversely, the echo in

*The Duchess of Malfi*, like the action of revenge itself, also pushes characters forward into a future which they have actively and usually detrimentally, influenced. We see this temporal aspect of the echo expressed later in the play. Antonio holds a conversation with an echo in 5.3:

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <i>Antonio</i> | 'Tis very like my wife's voice.  |
| <i>Echo</i>    | <i>Ay, wife's voice</i>  |
| <i>Delio</i>   | Come, let's walk father from 't.<br>I would not have you go to th' Cardinal's tonight.<br>Do not.                                |
| <i>Echo</i>    | <i>Do not.</i>   |
| <i>Delio</i>   | Wisdom doth not more moderate wasting of sorrow<br>Than time: take time for 't; be mindful of thy safety.                        |
| <i>Echo</i>    | <i>Be mindful of thy safety.</i>   |
| <i>Antonio</i> | Necessity compels me:<br>Make scrutiny throughout the passes<br>Of your own life, you'll find it impossible<br>To fly your fate. |
| <i>Echo</i>    | <i>O, fly your fate!</i>   |

(5.4.26-35)

The Duchess, speaking as an echo from her grave, forewarns her husband of the Cardinal's plot on his life. She doesn't just *repeat* his words, she gives new meaning to them through their slight alteration. This echo is not a mere sterile repetition of the past but actively works to influence the future. At the same time that the Echo and Delio advise Antonio to wait rather than act, the temporal resonances of the Echo itself push him into a future which ultimately only he can control through his own actions. This passage thus describes the conflicted temporal position of all early modern Christians: both waiting and not waiting for the ultimate end to be realised. The dual temporality expressed in these revenge tragedies through the motif of the echo reflects on the dual temporality of revenge itself and in turn reflects the early modern Christian's inherent temporal instability.

As he faces death at the very end of *The Duchess of Malfi*, Bosola exclaims 'O, I am gone! | We are only like dead walls, or vaulted graves, | That ruined, yields no echo' (5.5.96-8). Through this image, death is defined as an abyss from which there is no return.



Bosola throws his voice out to the elements, yet receives no reply. He is trapped in the delay of the space between initiating act and echoing repetition. The echoing return which all Christians want to hear is that of God's revengeful justice on the Day of Judgement – and it is that echo which for Bosola, as for all Christians, is indefinitely deferred. The bleak message at the end of this play is, therefore, that the act of God's revenge, which will look back on all human life and by judging it, give it meaning, is perpetually delayed. Human-kind under God is, as a result, defined by that delay.

In 'The Description of Cooke-ham', Aemilia Lanyer's valediction to an all-female pastoral idyll and to Lady Anne Clifford's virginal youth, the unformed echo similarly expresses a sense of loss and of disempowerment. The 'delay' which positively defines Lanyer's rural retreat – a temporality which is expressed through the repetitive themes and language used in the poem and the rejection of linearity which that repetition suggests – must come to an end. The image of the 'Delightfull Eccho', a wood nymph who 'wonted to reply | To our last words' and who 'did now for sorrow die' with which Lanyer concludes the poem thus works to suggest that Lady Anne's impending marriage is a rejection of the delay represented by the echo which temporally defines this female paradise (ll. 199-299). The end of the poem is the end of a specific kind of temporally ordered female haven which is destroyed by the subjection of Lady Anne as a young wife to her new husband. Lanyer thus transforms the delay which is used to define subversive femininity into a delay which defines virtuous and liberated femininity. Similarly, in Lady Anne's life writing as explored in the Coda to this thesis, it is through her manipulation of delay *as* a positive form of action and her ability to utilise the tropes of patience, prodigality and revenge as they are presented to her in the literature and drama she consumed as a young woman, that I suggest she is able to resist, or at least employ to her own advantage, the reductive and temporally gendered positions of chaste maid, postponed heiress and patient wife. As I have argued,

Lady Anne's dual temporality – the action she takes through her delay – ultimately empowers her to realise her own brand of passive revenge.

This thesis has provided new insight into the construction of gender in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by exploring the ways in which early modern drama presents men and women within different temporal frames. I have argued that early modern subjects were defined by temporality in the same way that they were defined by the more commonly explored strata of gender, class and race. In the introduction to this thesis, I outlined the ways in which the conduct and medical literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provided a rich context for my discussion of the temporal gendering – or the gendered temporalising – of the early modern subject. The main body of my thesis has explored how complex interactions between the axes of gender and time found in conduct and medical works were also manifest in the drama of the period. Each chapter of this thesis has been concerned with exploring the multiple ways in which the drama of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean stage engages with the binary oppositions of action / delay and of male / female.

As has become clear, one of the most frequently occurring intersections of the temporal and gendered axes in these plays aligns men with authorised action and women with subversive delay. I have suggested that the foundation of this specific alignment of time and gender is the early modern physiological belief that because women are 'developmentally' delayed – malformed and incomplete men – they are necessarily incapable of the virtuous action which defines masculine authority: they are, by nature idle, lazy and incompetent. However, early modern conduct and medical literature also suggests that left to their own devices, all women would follow Eve's example and *act* subversively, thus exposing their 'natural' propensity for sexual and social impropriety. Furthermore, identities of authorised femininity are also defined as delayed via the passive virtues of

patience and chastity. Thus women are created as subversive in their action *and* in their delay, and can only inhabit authorised social identities when they are totally passive and obedient. Ultimately therefore, I have suggested that both a Christian temporality, which values delay as authorised over subversive action, and a patriarchal temporality, which denigrates delay and celebrates action, work together on the early modern stage to maintain control over women. Although women are aligned with a variety of temporalities, all those temporalities ultimately work to disempower them.

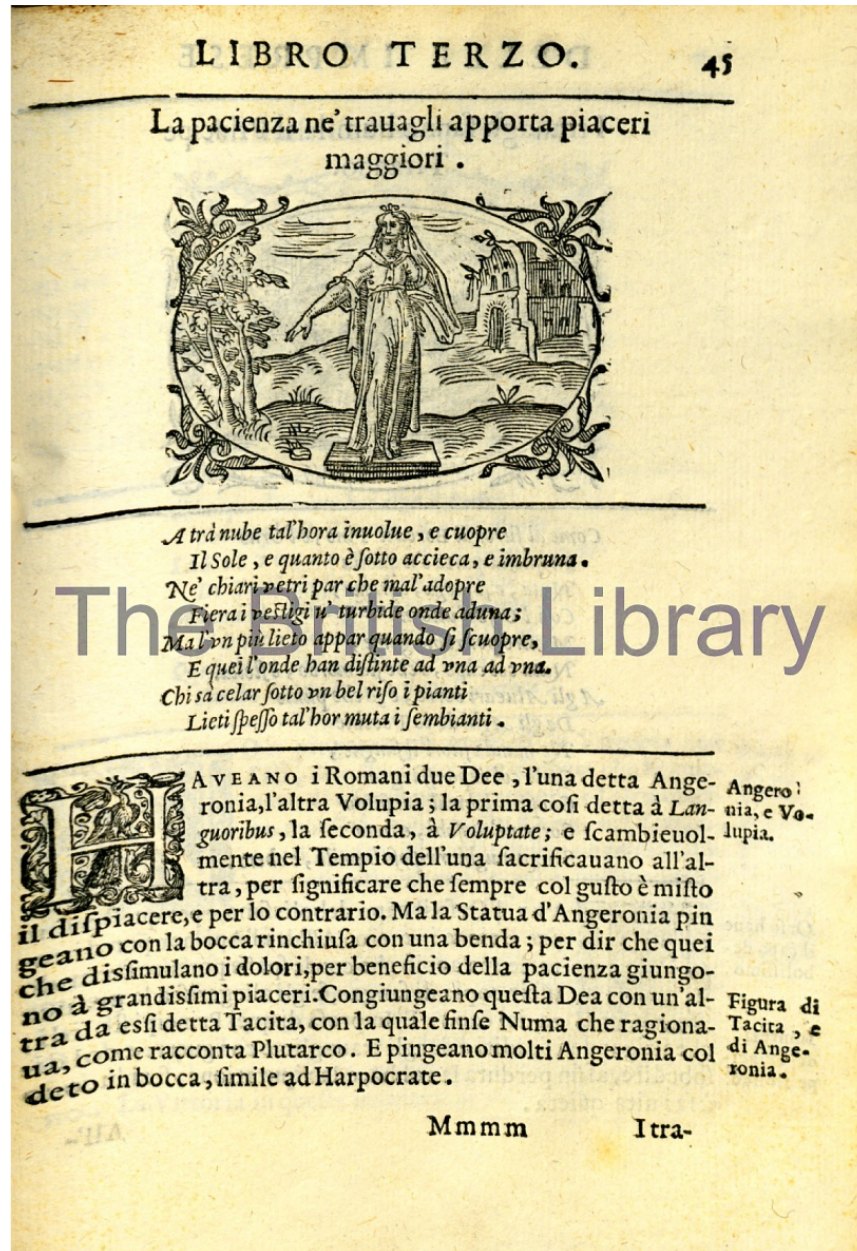
As my analysis of early modern theatre has shown, there are few exceptions to this temporal gendering of women: very rarely are women presented as authorised and empowered through their own virtuous actions. Male temporality, on the other hand, enables men to be authorised in both their action (as the head of the family unit) and in their delay (as the patient and obedient yet self-improving Christian subject). However, in the same way that women are created as temporally subversive through the actions and the delays which pose a threat to patriarchal control, men are created as temporally subversive through the actions and delays which pose a threat to *God's* control. Thus the prodigal and the revenger are presented as challenging the ultimate patriarchal authority through temporalities of both action and delay.

This temporal gendering is manifest on the early modern stage by the chaste maids, patient wives, whores and shrews, as well as the prodigal and patient sons, husbands, and revengers, who constitute the drama of the plays I have analysed. Although, as I have suggested, these characters on one level present a temporally ordered world in which the active authority of man and of God is ultimately upheld against the subversive delay of women, I have also argued that the multiplicity of intersections between the binaries of action / delay and male / female actually work to deconstruct those binaries themselves.

Joan W. Scott suggests that the echo ‘destabilizes any effort to limit the possibilities of “sustained metaphoricity” by reminding us that identity (in the sense both of sameness and selfness) is constructed in complex and diffracted relation to others’ (Scott, 292). At the end of this thesis, I return to Derrida’s *différance* and the perpetual play of meanings – the echoes through time – which suggest that it is through delay itself that both language and subjectivity are created. My own exploration of delay as a concept through which gendered identities are negotiated and defined has suggested that temporality is one of the socially constructed frameworks through which a variety of subjects are created in early modern culture and drama. This thesis expresses my belief that it is important for studies of early modern drama to recognise the role temporality – and the binary opposition between action and delay which I have argued dominated early modern concepts of time – plays in structuring the performance of gender. Beyond this thesis, I believe it is crucial for future work to acknowledge how that binary opposition intersects with the other hierarchies of difference, including sexuality, race and social status, through which we attempt to understand the social construction of the early modern subject.

Figure 1

Giulio Cesare Capaccio, *Dell Trattato Del'Imprese*, 3 vols (Napoli, 1592), III, 4Mr.



**Figure 2**

Hans Beham Sebald, *Pacientia - Die Geduld* (1540).



**Figure 3**

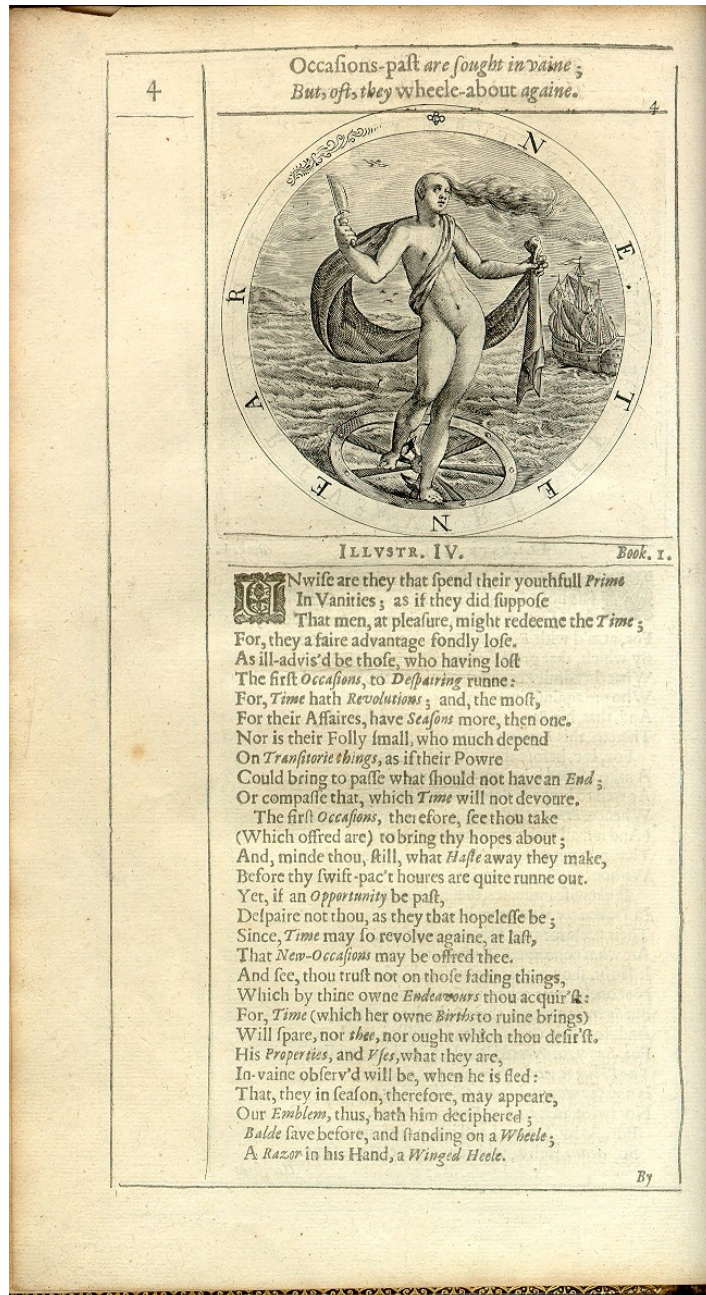
William Cowper, *The workes of Mr Willia[m] Cowper late bishop of Galloway Now Newly Collected into One Volume. Whereunto is added a comentary on the Reuelation neuer before published. Also an alphabeticall table for the finding out the principall heads contained in euery booke* (London, 1623), titlepage.





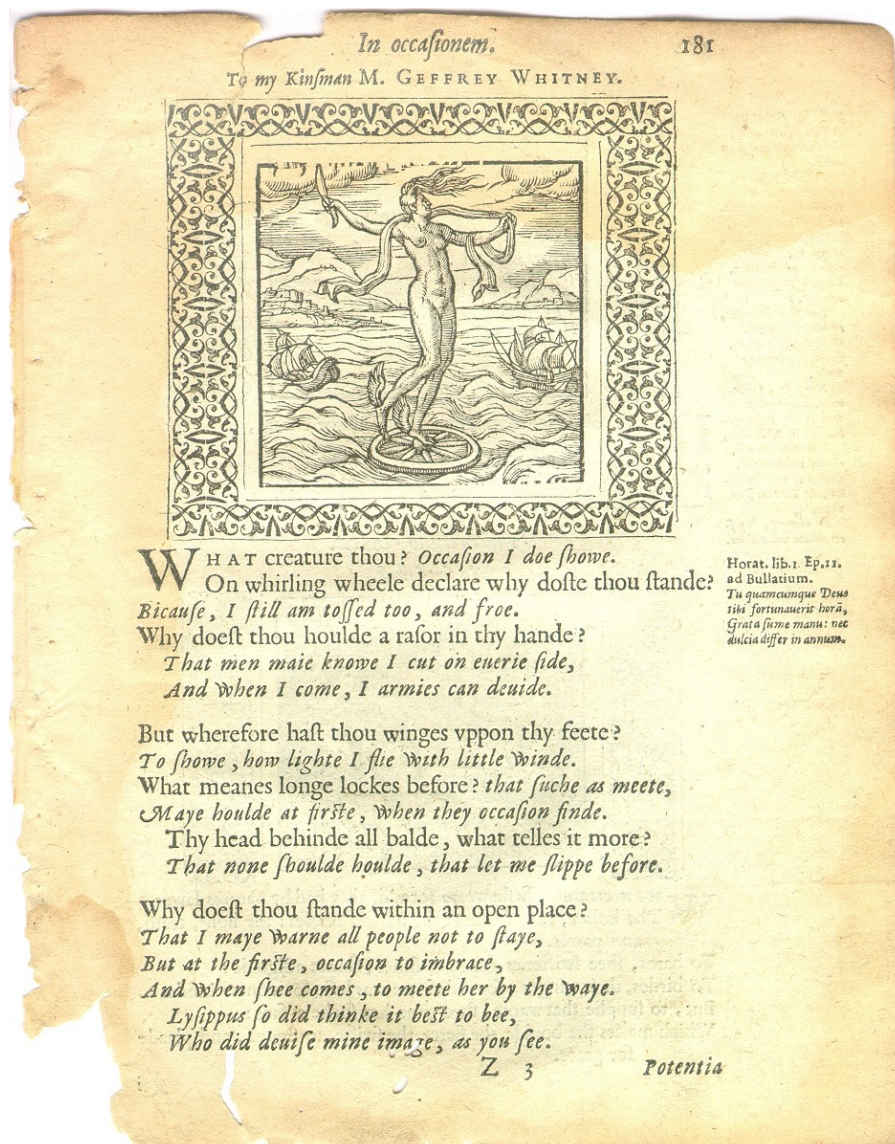
**Figure 4**

George Wither, *A collection of emblemes, ancient and moderne quickened with metricall illustrations, both morall and divine: and disposed into lotteries, that instruction, and good counsell, may bee furthered by an honest and pleasant recreation.* By George Wither. The first booke (London, 1635), B2v.



**Figure 5**

Geffrey Whitney, *A choice of emblemes, and other deuises, for the moste parte gathered out of sundrie writers, Englished and moralized. And diuers newly deuised, by Geffrey Whitney. A worke adorned with varietie of matter, both pleasant and profitable: wherein those that please, maye finde to fit their fancies: bicause herein, by the office of the eie, and the eare, the minde maye reape dooble delighte throughe holsome preceptes, shadowed with pleasant deuises: both fit for the vertuous, to their incoraging: and for the wicked, for their admonishing and amendment* (London, 1586), Z3r.





**Figure 6**

[Jan van Belcamp], 'The Great Picture', 1646, in Elspeth Graham et al., eds, *Her own life: autobiographical writings by seventeenth-century Englishwomen* (London: Routledge, 1989; repr. 1996), p. 36.



**Figure 7**

Inigo Jones, 'Costume for Berenice' from *The Masque of Queens* (1609), in Christian M. Billing, *Masculinity, corporality and the English stage 1580-1635* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), p. 125.



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accenting of euery worde throughout the whole dictionarie, for the true  
pronunciation of the language, as also for the diuers signification of one and the  
selfsame word: and for the learners ease and furtherance, the declining of all hard  
and irregular verbs; and for the same cause the former order of the alphabet is  
altered, diuers hard and vncouth phrases and speeches out of sundry of the best  
authors explained, with diuers necessarie notes and especiall directions for all such  
as shall be desirous to attaine the perfection of the Spanish tongue. All done by Iohn  
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